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SHADOWLAND MAGAZINE

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GODZILLA

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HORROR
FILMS

HELLRAISER
VIRTUAL
HELL

MY DEAR, CAN I
INTEREST YOU
IN A BITE?

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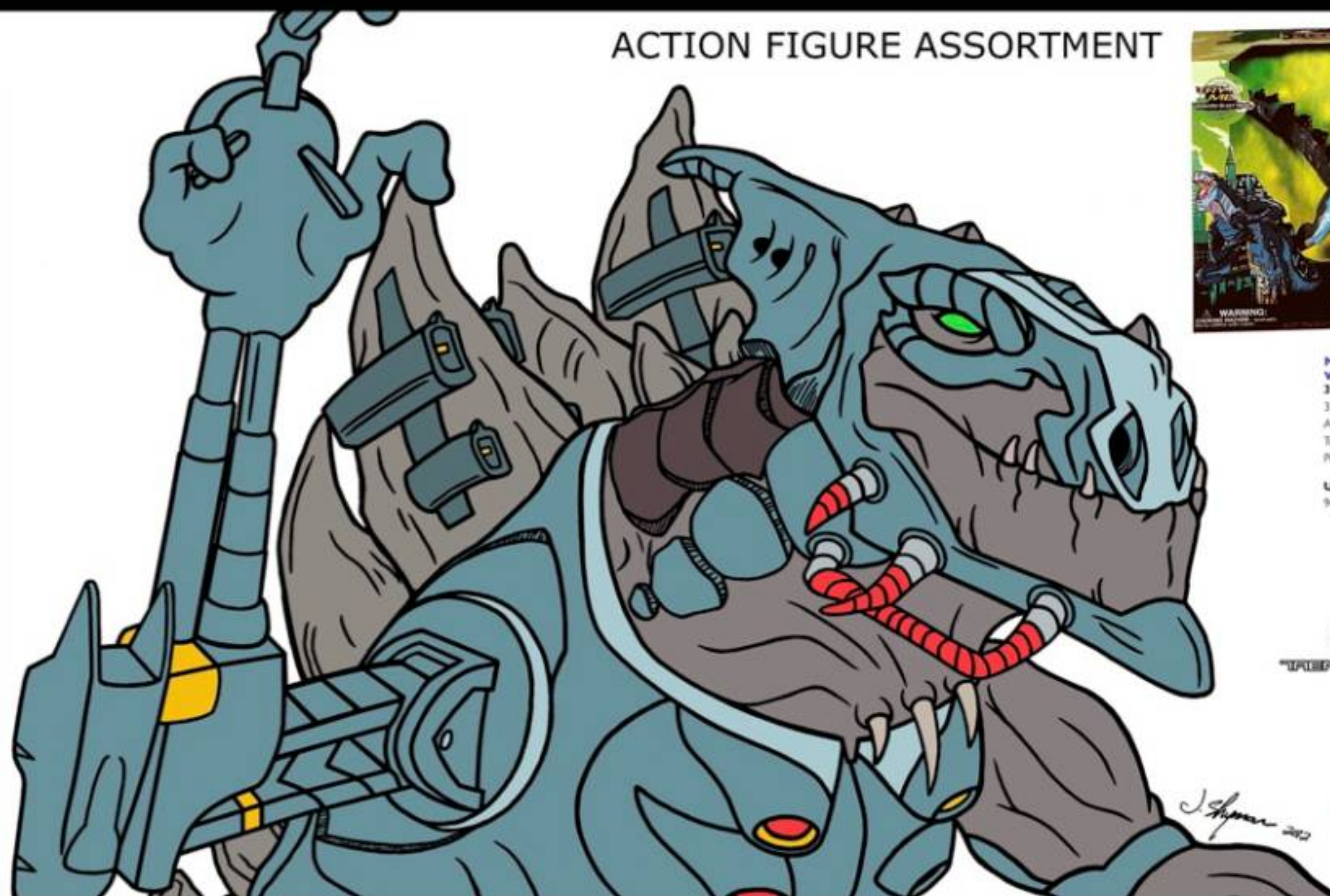
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and Boris Karloff

in

MAD MONSTER PARTY?



With the talents of Alan Swift
Gale Garnett

DREADITORIAL

Mad monsters, Cenobites, giant radioactive lizards, Watchmen, evil Santas, and zombies! I guess one could say that our sixth issue has a little bit of everything...

Kicking *Shadowland* off this edition is a retrospective on *Mad Monster Party* (which made its monstrous debut 45 years ago)! It appears that *MMP* is experiencing something of a minor resurgence, considering the recent Blu-ray release and upcoming line of action figures. Hopefully this means the out-of-print soundtrack will be made available again, as it's currently fetching high prices on eBay (when it appears, which isn't often).

Get out your puzzle boxes! Following up on last issue's *History of Horror Video Games* article, we have an insider perspective on the unreleased *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell* video game.

Everyone's familiar with Godzilla's exploits on the silver screen, but his animated adventures are not nearly as popular. Hanna-Barbera's Godzilla was an interesting take on the iconic character and Daniel DeAngelo explores it here, complete with an episode guide chronicling all of the animated G's exploits!

As promised last issue, we have an in-depth piece on the Trendmasters toy line with collector Jonathan Shyman, who shares his mind-bending collection of rare figures and prototypes with us.

While some readers may already be getting excited for the holiday season, others might feel indifferent to the approaching festivities, nevertheless, Todd Werner's list of *The Top 10 Christmas Horror Films* should be enough to get everyone interested in seeing what this odd little sub-genre has to offer.

Next issue we'll usher in 2013 – and what better way to celebrate the start of the new year than with the *end*, or more appropriately, the apocalypse! That's right, *Shadowland* will be taking a look at the history of *Apocalypse Cinema*. Dystopian films like *Planet of the Apes*, *Logan's Run*, and *Mad Max* are all certain to be covered, but we'll also be taking a deeper glimpse at some of the lesser known cinematic entries.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Cover: Dracula and Francesca appear ready to leap off the cover and sing "Our Time to Shine" in yet another striking masterpiece by Dwayne Pinkney! Mr. Pinkney is available for commissions at DPinkneyArt@hotmail.com - more of his artwork can also be seen at www.ShadowlandMagazine.com.

Inside Front Cover: (Top) Jonathan Shyman's impressive artwork of Cyber-Godzilla, made to look like a page out of a Trendmasters Dealers Catalog! (Bottom) An original publicity advertisement for *Mad Monster Party*.

Back Cover: Dwayne Pinkney offers some gruesome Halloween delight with his Cackles the Witch piece!
Contributors: Jeffrey Baines, Cassie Carnage, Flynn Cook, Daniel DeAngelo, Stan Fuller, Jerome Haller, Chris Hallock, Gabino Iglesias, Dustin LaValley, Jim Mills, Aaron Percival, Adam Reynolds, Joseph Rubas, Jonathan Singer, Kevin Sproles, Lisa Stilts, Frank Warden, Todd Werner. *Special thanks* to Doug Barnett, Mark Gervais, Count Lyle, Dwayne Pinkney, Jonathan Shyman, Stewart Stanyard, and Jeff Strand!

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NEWS BITES

AN ULTRA DVD RELEASE

Tokusatsu fans rejoice – Shout! Factory has acquired the distribution rights for *Ultra Seven* (1967), the follow-up to the original *Ultraman* television show.



Ultra Seven had previously aired in the United States on TNT back in the mid '90s, however it was severely edited and marred by poor dubbing. The complete series, in its original Japanese language with English subtitles, will arrive on Region 1 DVD for the first time on December 11th, 2012.

STARS & STRIPES

Chris Evans, star of *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011) and *The Avengers* (2012), has stated that he would like to make a cameo in the upcoming *Thor* sequel, subtitled *The Dark World*. Evans also mentioned that some deleted scenes of Captain America from *The Avengers* may end up in the next Cap film, *The Winter Soldier*. Sequels to *Thor* and *Captain America* are headed to theaters in 2013.

DETROIT'S FINEST

Columbia Pictures' remake of 1987's *Robocop* will be blasting its way onto screens August 9th, 2013. Joel Kinnaman (*Safe House*) will be playing the title character while Gary Oldman, Samuel L. Jackson, Abbie Cornish, Michael Keaton, and Jackie Earle Haley co-star.

BATTLEFIELD
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Columbia Pictures' viral marketing campaign for 2013's *Robocop* offered a first glimpse of the remodeled ED-209.



DEADLY GAMES

With the box-office failure of *Battleship*, studios are cautiously rethinking the potential of board game related films. *Ouija*, based on the classic Parker Brothers game, was dropped by Paramount before shifting hands to Universal, who intends to produce the film on a lower budget. *Ouija* is planned for an October 2013 release.

ECTO VISION

Mattel's Matty Collector division revealed their upcoming *Ghostbusters* Ecto Goggles prop replica at the 2012 San Diego Comic Con. Matty found success with their previous *Ghostbusters* props, the PKE meter and ghost trap, both seen in the 1984 film and its sequel. A late 2012 release for the Ecto Goggles is expected. Visit MattyCollector.com for updates.

WE'RE NOT IN MORDOR ANYMORE

Elijah Wood (*Lord of the Rings* trilogy) has traded hobbits for horror in the upcoming release of *Maniac*, a remake of the 1980 cult classic starring Joe Spinell. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, but production company IFC Midnight has yet to announce a release date.



VACANCY FOR THE DAMNED

Bates Motel is reopening for business thanks to a new television series from A&E. The series, fittingly titled *Bates Motel*, will focus on a young Norman Bates (Freddie Highmore) during his formative years prior to going *Psycho*. Instead of ordering a pilot, A&E is developing an entire season.

NINJA MADNESS IN HIGH-DEFINITION

Cult anime masterpiece *Ninja Scroll* will finally be getting a Blu-ray release on December 4th 2012 in the United States. No word yet on what special features can be expected. Fans in the U.K. will be getting an earlier Blu-Ray release in November, along with a special limited steelbook edition and 20-page booklet.

THE WEED OF CRIME BEARS BITTER FRUIT

The Shadow Knows, a new two-hour documentary, examines the Shadow's long history in radio, pulp novels, comics, television and film. Every milestone is covered from the character's mysterious origins to the 1994 feature film starring Alec Baldwin, making this a definitive look into the pulp hero's impressive legacy. *The Shadow Knows* is currently available on DVD at Amazon.com.



GRITTY GHOSTS

Legendary Pictures is hoping to have a 2014 theatrical release for their supernatural action film, *Spectral*. Written by newcomer Ian Fried, *Spectral* is being sold as *Ghostbusters* meets *Black Hawk Down*, focusing on a special ops team that has to fend off troublesome ghosts in New York City. Unlike *Ghostbusters*, the film won't be played for laughs, instead opting for a dark and edgy approach.

THE WANDERING ASSASSIN TURNS TO LIVE-ACTION

Based on the popular manga and anime series, *Rurouni Kenshin* has been given a live-action adaptation. Produced by Warner Brothers and Japanese production company Studio Swan, the film was released in Japan on August 25th, 2012. The plot revolves around Kenshin Himura, a swordsman with a bloody past who has vowed to never kill again. Both Warner Brothers and Studio Swan have expressed interest in releasing the

film worldwide in the near future.



THE FORCE RETURNS

Little has been announced regarding the *Star Wars* franchise as of late, save for *1313* – an upcoming video game that will have the player taking on the role of a bounty hunter. Set in the gritty underbelly of the *Star Wars* universe, *1313* promises to be an 'adult' perspective on the galaxy far, far away, while pushing the limits of video game graphics and gameplay. No release date is yet known, but all signs point to *1313* being released during the next generation of consoles – so 2014 at the earliest.



THE NEXT FRONTIER

Director J.J. Abrams is moving ahead on the sequel to 2009's *Star Trek*. The follow-up, currently titled *Star Trek into Darkness*, is in production and slated for a May 17th 2013 release.



AVATARS AND BATTLE ANGELS

James Cameron is putting all his Na'vi in one basket as he recently hinted at further plot details for *Avatar 2* and 3, not to mention a fourth film which will serve as a prequel. According to *Avatar* producer Jon Landau, Cameron is still interested in bringing Yukito Kishiro's manga *Battle Angel Alita* to the big screen. Cameron has been connected to a live-action adaptation of the manga for years, but Landau has affirmed that it won't hit theaters until at least 2017.



Yukito Kishiro's manga, *Battle Angel Alita*.

MONSTER MADNESS REMEMBERING MAD MONSTER PARTY

CASE!

BY FRANK WARDEN

YIPE!

For nearly twenty years, between the 1960s and 1980s, Rankin/Bass Productions released a varied assortment of feature films, animated television specials, and TV shows. Today they are best known for their seasonal mainstays like *Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer* (1964), *The Little Drummer Boy* (1968), and *Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town* (1970), all of which employed stylized stop-motion animation – a technique referred to as ‘Animagic’. With such memorable and timeless productions it’s easy to forget that Rankin/Bass also delved into traditional cel animation with *The Hobbit* (1977) *The Last Unicorn* (1982), and *ThunderCats* (1985). They even paired up with Toho, the Japanese studio responsible for the Godzilla films, to co-produce live-action ventures like *King Kong Escapes* (1968) and *The Last Dinosaur* (1977). Of course, all the aforementioned productions fail to even scrape the surface of Rankin/Bass’ long and storied filmography.

However, for horror fans, Rankin/Bass’ pinnacle achievement arrived in the form of 1967’s *Mad Monster Party* – a monstrous stop-motion endeavor that could easily be the Halloween equivalent to Christmas’ signature *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* special. Though unlike *Rudolph*, which was made for TV, *Mad Monster Party* went to theaters and had been met with little fanfare, suffering from lack of promotion and, in turn, dismal ticket sales. The box office failure of *Mad Monster Party* was one of many circumstances that led to the film becoming such an obscure rarity for years. It wouldn’t be until 2003 when this gem finally received a proper DVD release thanks to Anchor Bay.

The plot of *Mad Monster Party* centers on Baron von Frankenstein who, in the midst of retiring from the ‘monster business’, invites every known mon-star to his castle to name his successor. This rampaging roster includes Dracula, the Invisible Man, the Werewolf, the Mummy, the Hunchback of Notre Dame, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Yet no party would be complete without Frankenstein’s Monster (referred to as Fang), his mate – and the bumbling Yetch, a ghoulish Peter Lorre caricature. Among this impressive gathering of fiends is Felix Flanken, the Baron’s inept human nephew. Even ‘It’, an obvious stand-in for King Kong, makes an appearance.



As could be expected from a group of ghouls, some are all too eager to be named heir to the good doctor’s legacy and would try anything to claim the title, along with acquiring the secret of the Baron’s latest discovery: a means to completely destroy matter!

Mad Monster Party is really a one-of-a-kind film, and one that was only possible in 1967. The visuals, music, and humor were

EEK!



Staying one step ahead, Felix has a talk with his uncle, The Baron.

products of their time and yet, everything still holds up amazingly well today. The pre-computer stop-motion animation is a marvel to behold, perhaps even more intricate and well-done than any of Rankin/Bass' previous efforts, including *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. The Animagic process has never looked better, having been handled by the very capable Tadahito Mochinaga.

The fantastic character designs deserve a mention as well, featuring handiwork by the incomparable Jack Davis, who had previously applied his artistic talents to EC Comics' 1950's *Tales from the Crypt* anthology series (among other related titles like *The Haunt of Fear/The Vault of Horror*) and *Mad Magazine*. Harvey

Kurtzman, who was a founding editor of *Mad* and writer on the *Playboy* magazine comic strip *Little Annie Fannie*, would pen the script to *Mad Monster Party* along with revisions from Len Korobkin and the film's producer, Arthur Rankin Jr. Anyone familiar with Kurtzman's humorous comic strips will find many

similarities in *Mad Monster Party*, especially with the character of Francesca, the Baron's voluptuous assistant.

It's rather ironic that *Mad Monster Party* suffered from a meager publicity campaign upon its release, considering it was co-produced by advertising titan Joseph E. Levine, who had previously been instrumental in bringing 1954's *Gojira* to the United States. Levine had Americanized the Japanese film with actor Raymond Burr to create *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* which went on to gross a remarkable \$2 million in the U.S. – a staggering box office amount for a sci-fi flick in the mid '50s. Levine's long list of producing credits included *Zulu* (1964), *The Graduate* (1967), and *The Lion in Winter* (1968) – each one a commercial success – making it all the more surprising that he let *Mad Monster Party* fall through the cracks.

Jules Bass helmed the film as director, marking one of the few times that he



Dr. Jekyll's alter ego is always ready for a game of 'Hyde and Seek'.

handled directorial duties alone. His direction is applied well here, and the film's 95 minute running time races by without any dull moments or forced plot contrivances. Even the musical scenes, scored by Maury Laws, blend seamlessly with the action and adds much to an already fun movie.

Speaking of *Mad Monster Party's* music, the score is a treat in and of itself. Every song is likeable and just as memorable as anything else from Rankin/Bass' vast musical catalog. The unforgettable opening theme, sung



Love at first bite? Dracula and Francesca devise a scheme.



by Jazz musician Ethel Ennis, is perfectly paired with an amusing montage showcasing the monsters getting their invitations to the Baron's castle. Another catchy song, "The Mummy", is played during the dinner party scene – performed by a group of skeletons clearly modeled after the Beatles, called Little Tibia and the Fibias!



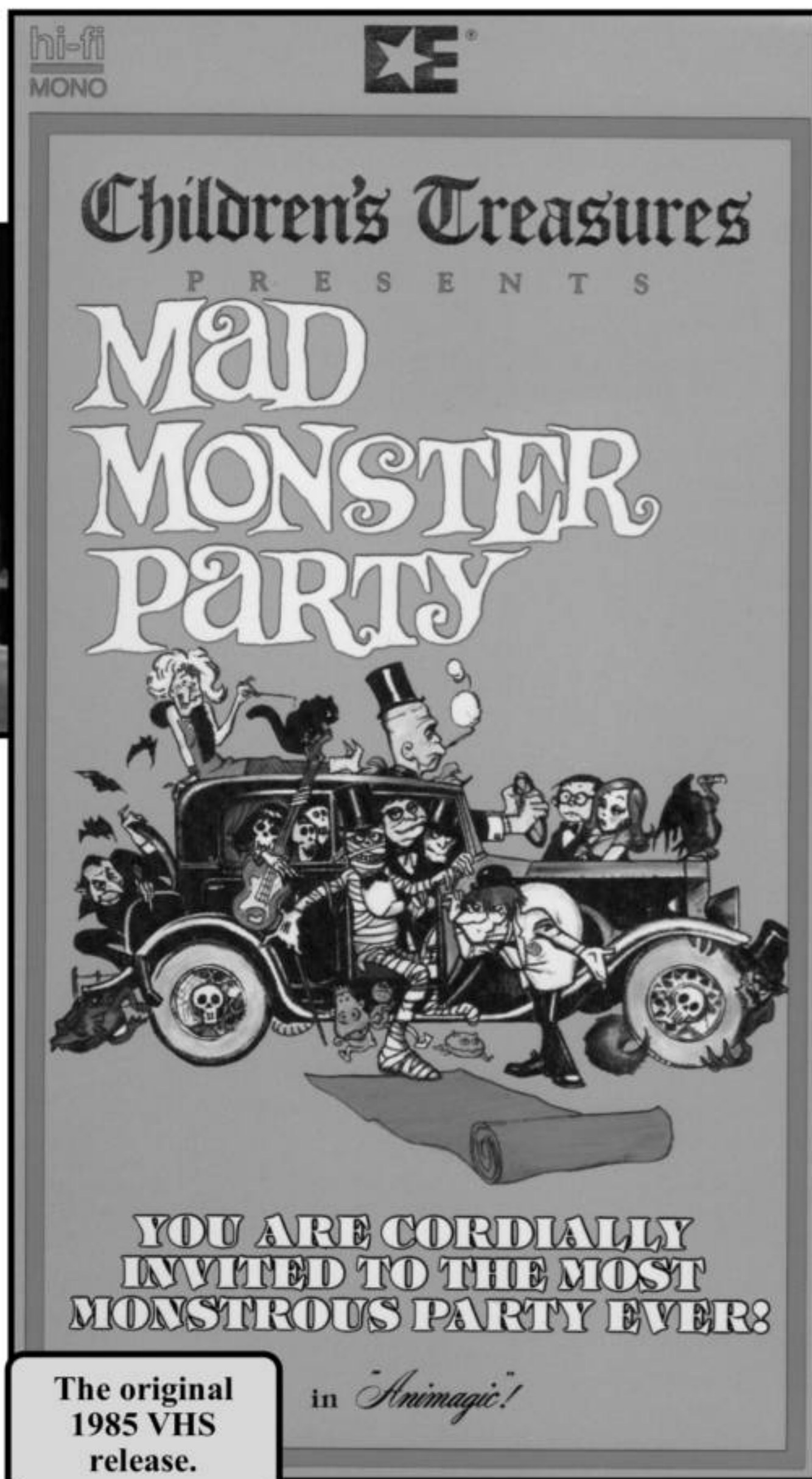
Regardless of how outstanding every element of *Mad Monster Party* is, nothing compares to the film's impeccable voice talent. Foremost, the immortal Boris Karloff infuses life into Baron von Frankenstein, also getting a chance to employ his singing talents on the song "One Step Ahead". It was one of Karloff's last performances and his final role connected to any of the Frankenstein mythos – but despite his deteriorating health, he gives a vocal feat of prowess that few actors today can remotely match. Karloff was always regarded as a class act and it's a testament to his character that he applied himself to *every* acting job, whether it was film (even the low-budget Mexican horror pictures late in his career), television, or animation.



Phyllis Diller provided the likeness and voice for the Monster's mate, (who could forget Diller's iconic laugh). Her character's scenes nearly steal the show, especially her 'cat fight' with Francesca, complete with hissing cat sounds! Diller even sings a melodic little num-

ber to her man-made companion, Fang, early in the film, titled "You're Different". Sadly Phyllis Diller passed away on August 20th, 2012; age never slowed her down though, at 95 she was still very active, having made frequent appearances on television in 2011.

Gale Garnett, an actress and singer, most known for her 1964 song "We'll Sing in the Sunshine" gave Francesca her voice and sung not one, but two songs in *Mad Monster Party*, "Our Time to Shine" and "Never Was a Love Like Mine". As hard as it is to believe, Allen Swift provided the voice for every *other* character in the film, from Dracula, Yetch, the Invisible Man, and



even Felix Flanken – he did them all!

Mad Monster Party was first released on VHS back in 1985 and, nearly two decades later, arrived on DVD thanks to the efforts of distributor Anchor Bay.



They went on to re-release the DVD in 2005 while Lionsgate gave fans a "Special Edition" in 2009. The film finally received a conversion to Blu-ray in September of this year. The *Mad Monster Party* soundtrack had long been unreleased until, in 1998, Percepto Records came out with a 14-track CD containing the film's musical score.



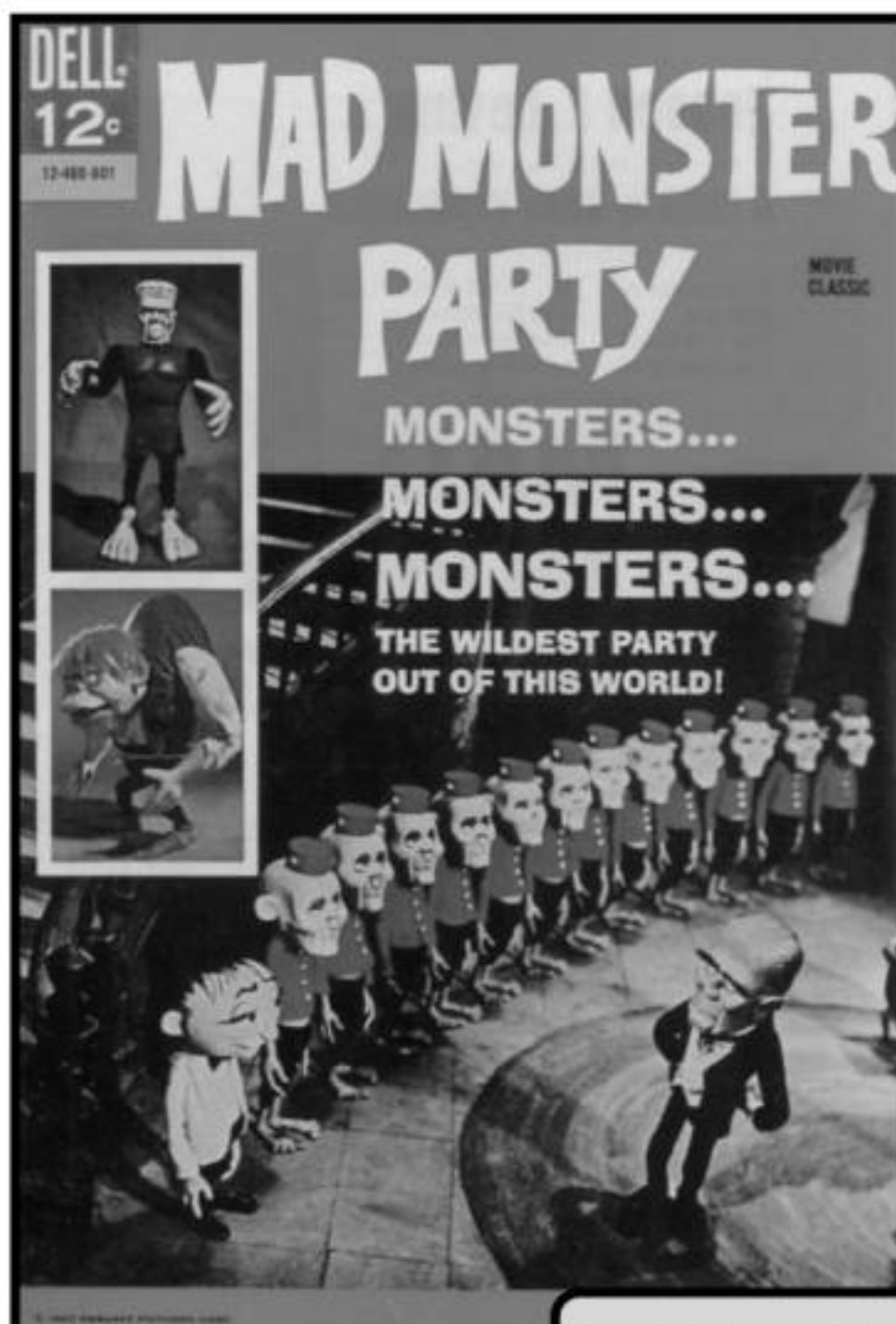
The out-of-print 1998 CD soundtrack.

The merchandising for *Mad Monster Party* has been sporadic, at best. Originally, a one-shot comic was published by Dell in 1967 to coincide

with the film's release. For decades any associated product tie-ins were scarce until the 1990s when a line of

unlicensed *Mad Monster Party* resin model kits were made. In 1999 Black Bear Press published an updated comic based on the film (it was to be a four-issue limited series, but only the first issue was ever available).

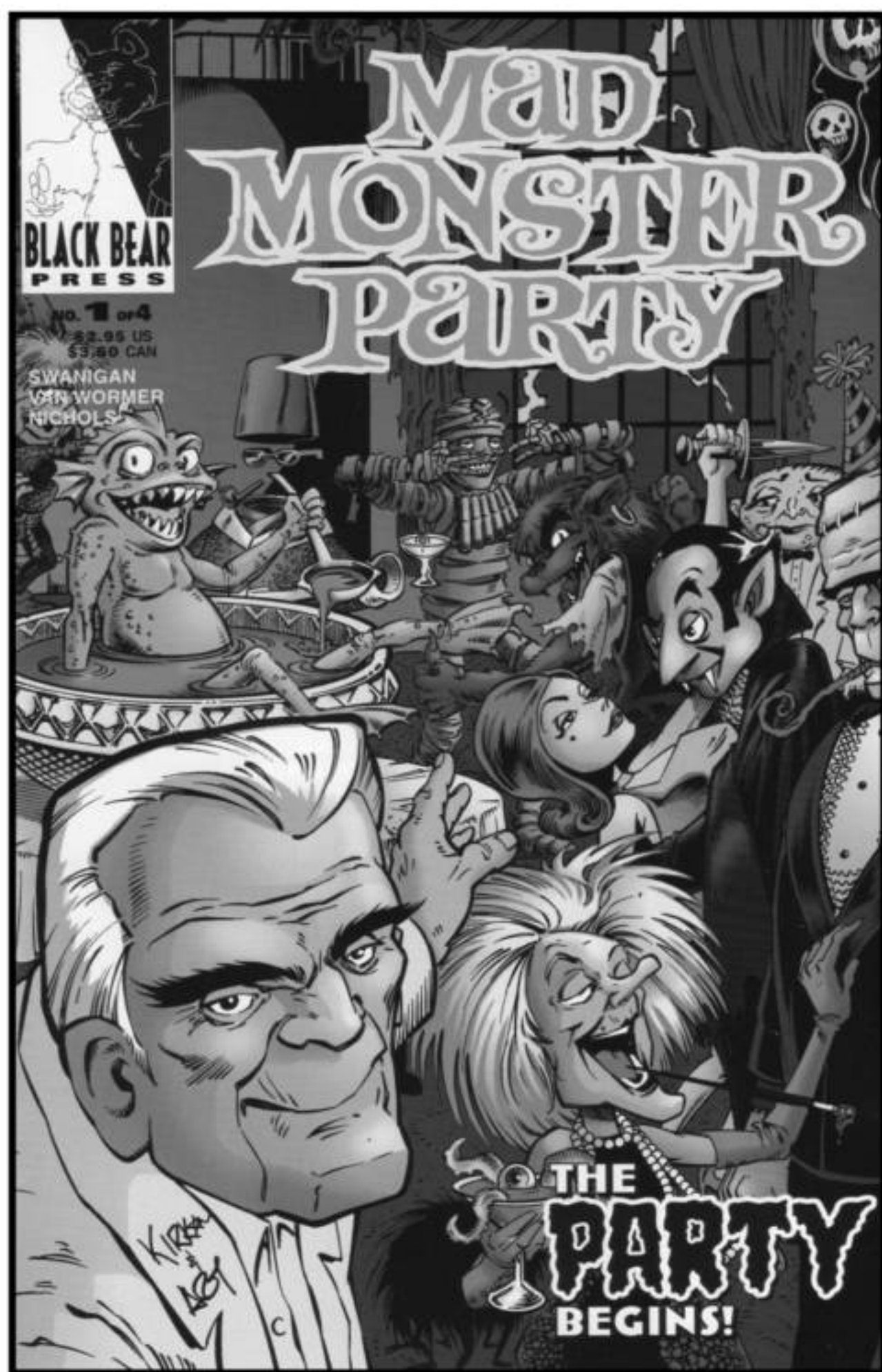
In 2006 Funko released a run of *Mad Monster Party* 7" vinyl figures, each limited to 1,500 pieces. Eight figures were produced, including



with the film's release. For decades any associated product tie-ins were scarce until the 1990s when a line of

The Monster's mate (not pictured) was the only other resin model kit to be released in the series.





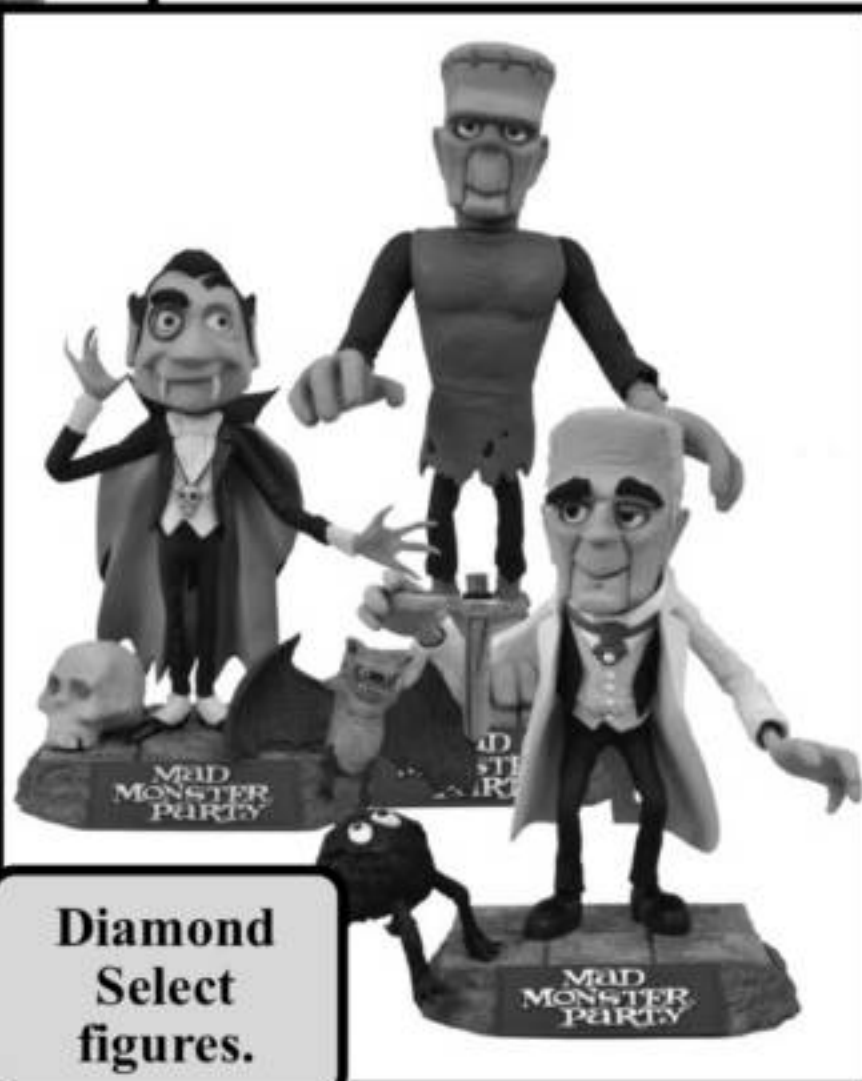
Dracula, the Werewolf, Fang, a Zombie Bellhop, Yetch, Francesca, Mr. Hyde, and a skeleton band member with guitar. Later a pricey 14" Fang figure was made available to consumers, but in very limited quantities.



14" Fang maquette.

Forty-five years later and, still, *Mad Monster Party* is as fresh, fanciful, and frightfully fun as it was back in 1967. Every facet of the film seems to mesh together so well that it would be virtually impossible to replicate that magic today.

Fortunately, as of this printing, fans of Rankin/Bass' underrated gem will be able to purchase detailed action figures of Baron Frankenstein, Fang and Dracula, complete with accessories, display bases, and collector-quality packaging. If the early press photos are any indication, these figures – released by Diamond Select – look to be a must have for *Mad Monster Party* fanatics.



Diamond Select figures.

Rankin/Bass even tried themselves with the 1972 animated television special, *Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters*. It was a noble attempt, but ultimately failed to acquire the energy apparent in *Mad Monster Party*. It didn't help that Karloff, who had passed away in 1969, was no longer doing the voice of the Baron, though Bob McFadden of *Milton the Monster* (1965) fame deserves credit for giving his best Karloff impersonation.



While Halloween is always a great time to watch *Mad Monster Party*, it's such a timeless film that any day of the year makes for a suitable viewing. If you haven't seen this

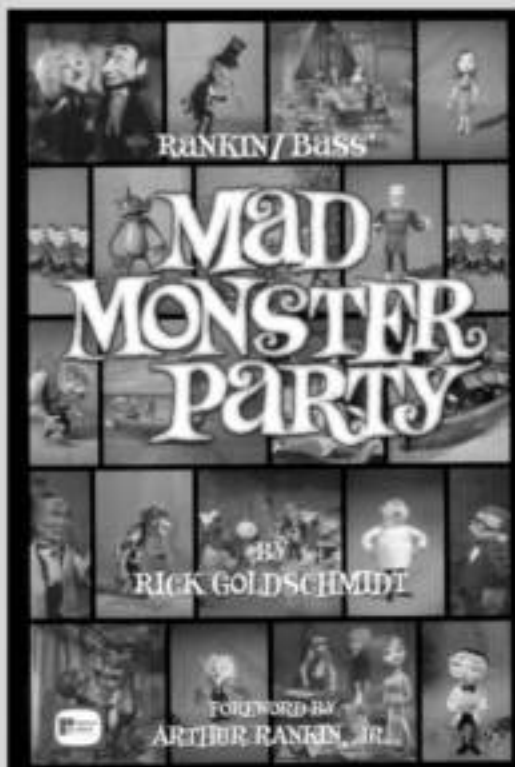
one and you're a classic monster fan, it goes without saying – this is a must see! Moreover, at a time when it gets harder and harder to find genuine family entertainment, *Mad Monster Party* endures as a generation spanning film that will excite and entertain viewers of all ages. To quote the Baron himself as he

prepares to send the invitations to his monstrous cohorts, "What a fine party they'll have when *they* all arrive!" And, rest assured, you will too...

Original promotional artwork for *Mad Monster Party* crafted by the master himself, Frank Frazetta.

A MONSTROUS READ

Back in 2011 Rick Goldschmidt published a 272 page book compiling the legacy of *Mad Monster Party*. This impressive tome included rare artwork, the 1967 shooting script, sheet music, the complete Dell comic, and interviews with the cast and crew.



OF WITCHES, WEREWOLVES AND WIND: A SALUTE TO OCTOBER

BY FLYNN COOK

The best time of year is upon us now. No, it isn't blockbuster movie season, nor is it Holiday time. The best time of year, my friends, is October. A time when the entire season almost disproves the quote about "nothing gold can stay." The trees certainly try, and through the right light, the sky turns a majestic gold itself.

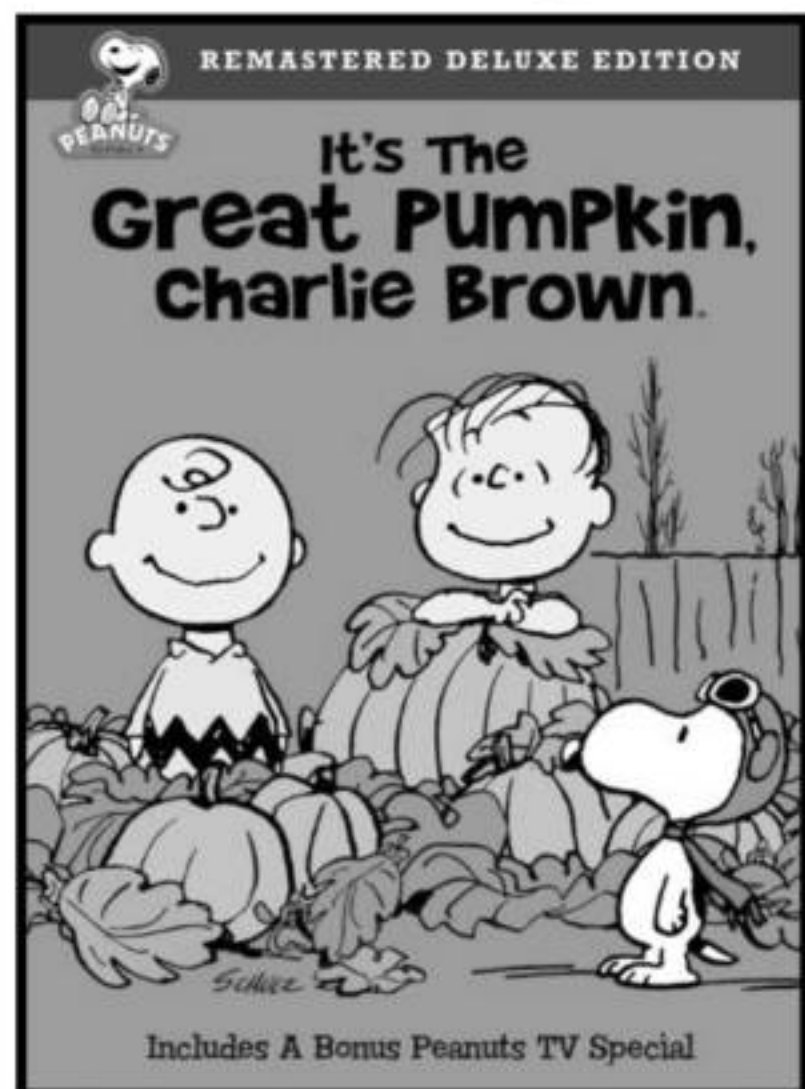
Is there a better month than October? I don't think so. Once you get old enough and the days of endless Christmas presents is behind you, you begin to put things in perspective and see just how special October is. The weather is finally over the heat and settles into a perfect middle-ground between warmth and cold. Often rainy and gloomy enough to be sobering but not depressing. October is the kind of month you spend indoors with a hot cup of coffee and a good book.

Of course, the capper is Halloween; it could be in no other month.

October, to me, is the time when I feel appropriately ghoulish and constantly want to soak in as much spooky content as I can. Every year I spend time cramming in Halloween specials like *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* and Disney's *Halloween Treat* between moody, atmospheric film scores like those of *Sleepy Hollow* and *Batman*. Of course, there are films you simply must indulge in. From truly horrific affairs like *The Haunting* and *The Thing* to lighter (but no less moody) fare like *Lady in White* or Disney's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Let's not forget the classics, though. All too-often overlooked: the chilling presence of Bela Lugosi as Dracula, or the vicious menace of Lon Chaney as the Wolf Man, the dark vistas of *Frankenstein* or the tension of *Psycho*. This primal urge of fright is intoxicating to society, and it's why we have such a fascination with the occult in pop culture. Halloween is an extrapolation of this. A time of year to enjoy being ghoulish. What could be better?

Is this mystique why I love October, and even fall so much? I suppose it's rooted in both. As far back as I can remember, I've been in love with the way the world looks during the season. Warm colors tend to give me a warmth of spirit; it's a pleasantness that is soothing but also spooky. Society may have shaped my perceptions of fall colors through Halloween itself, but to me all of the golds and oranges and browns just conjure in my mind sunsets in quiet neighborhoods, streets abandoned while the sun sets slowly, while candles flicker on in Jack O'Lanterns. The air is cool and smells of pumpkin spice.





It's this time of year that makes me wistful for things I don't know. I yearn for that sense of loneliness and isolation that fall/Halloween/fear seems to encapsulate.

Leaves in the streets just make me sense a sort of simplicity in life; things may not be so complicated after all. Maybe all we need to do is relax and soak in the world around us. Zen and all that stuff.

October just makes me feel connected to the world like no other time does. I feel the presence of quiet country roads beset by the autumn wind and the passage littered with fall colored leaves. Of corn fields with a lonely scarecrow making his stationary rounds. Rocking chairs creaking and dark paths through forests. I feel the presence of the supernatural. It infests me and makes me edgy and I love it.

Like Michael Jackson, I do not express a belief in the occult, but with such a month as October, I find it's all too right to step outside yourself and choose to believe in the spooky just for a little bit. It's that universal creep factor that we all can understand; it's something that can unite us as a people.



Halloween is a time to embrace what scares us and laugh in its face. To rule our fear by celebrating it. To show we ain't 'fraid of no ghosts, or to do the



Monster Mash. To indulge our sweet tooth, and to scare ourselves silly all in the name of fun. To rake the leaves and jump in with a wet sucker, or camp out in a pumpkin patch all night. To walk a graveyard at night, carve a pumpkin; sit on the porch until the sun sets or even to startle your friends.

For Halloween's sake, or even for October or fall's sake, light a Jack O'Lantern. Get yourself in the mood with the right music and lose yourself in the right book or horror film. Whatever you do, don't let the month pass without doing so. October is a month with a certain kind of sacred magic. Do it for your spirit. It's that primal sense of fear that engages our mind toward the unknown, a gift that should never go unheeded.

To comrades and Hallophiles one and all: Happy Halloween!



AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK GERVAIS CREATOR OF HALLOWINDOW

By Jim Mills

It excites me that I get to do something for one of the coolest Halloween decorating tools since forever. Up in Canada there is a guy named Mark Gervais who makes this killer (har har) projection video display called Hallowindow. Mark has put together animations and sound fx to enhance the spookiness and awesomeness for everyone to enjoy. Immediately after you read this you need to check out the website so you can verify just how awesome Hallowindow is. Check it out at: www.hallowindow.com

JIM MILLS: Halloween, what is so cool about Halloween? Turns out, Halloween is the second most profitable holiday following Christmas.

MARK GERVAIS: There are so many stories and subject matter that surround Halloween and I've found that it means different things to different people. For some it's about cute cartoon ghosts and for others it's about blood-spattered gore. For me it's about being creative but I think that's the core of what it means for a lot of people out there. You get to dress up like whatever you want...or dress your house up like it's a haunted cemetery or anything spooky. I know that October is sort of becoming the Halloween season but I still feel like it's concentrated on one night. The one night that you get to go all out. I think that lets people take more liberties to get in touch with darker aspects of themselves and have fun with it. Plus, I think we like being scared and grossed out...just look at all the vampire and zombie themed books and movies out there. It goes way beyond Halloween. Monsters and fear just seems to be attractive to our culture in general. Halloween just gives us a chance to try our hand at creating it.

JM: I've seen your setup at your house, looks pretty sweet, very organized and simple on the front porch. What are your aspirations for a super creepy decorating experience? Also how much did your setup cost, roughly?

MG: Thanks! First off, I should just say that my set-up pales in comparison to most of my customers' set-ups. I don't have a lot of physical props yet. I really just relied on my projection alone. I hope to add more props as our collection grows. But to answer your question...for me, I aspire to create a more realistic experience. My ideal

setup would have to feel authentic with really great props and then use Hallowindow to add to the props, like having ghosts projected behind wispy curtains or fire projected behind boarded up windows. I'm a fan of using the single themed animations for specific purposes. I am lucky to have a really great front door set up that is surrounded by windows so I'll always try to take advantage of that as much as I can. It was pretty tedious to setup though. In terms of cost I've had a few years to build up my collection. I've got three projectors now and they were around \$500 each...I can justify dropping a little more cash into it since it's my product I've gotta show off. My projection surfaces were just white paper this past year so they were pretty dirt cheap. I use digital files only so I bought some Apple iPod AV connection cables this past year and just connect my iPhone to the projectors to play the files. Those were about \$40 each I think.

JM: In regards to decorating for Halloween, are you a week of kinda guy or the whole month of October kinda guy?





Hallowindow, a collection of Halloween-themed animations for televisions and window projection set-ups, is currently available on both DVD and downloadable video files.

MG: HA! I'm more like the "day-of" kinda guy. I'm usually pretty busy with Hallowindow so it makes it hard to concentrate on my own stuff around that time of year. Other than getting my magnetic screen holders installed I think I pulled the whole front porch projection together the night before Halloween last year. I'm hoping we will have more time to dedicate to decorating this year.

JM: Hallowindow has personally created video and audio, how much does it take to get out a new Hallowindow each year?

MG: It seems to take a little more each year. On average I think I spend about two months in production. I just put my head down and work hard at it. It's kind of a blur after it's all done since I go from producing artwork and animation straight to shipping and customer service. Things usually get pretty nuts the last two weeks of October.

JM: Hallowindow is an absolute "shock and awe" decorating idea, people literally stop and take pictures at my house. How do you foresee it progressing or turning larger with exposure?

MG: Yeah, I really wasn't expecting the reactions that it spurred. I think it's really cool that people stop and watch for a while. I also know that the more people see it, the more it will just become another decoration. That's where I feel like it can become more of an augmentation to other decorations and props as opposed to center stage. I'd like to do more themed sets for people with multiple projectors as well as more customizable stuff that gives a little more creativity to the user. That brings me to another point. I really hope people get creative with how they use Hallowindow. It doesn't always have to be on a window...that's the beauty of projectors, you can make any surface a screen. We set up Hallowindow at a friend's house so that when

you open the door to give kids candy the entire wall just inside the house was lit up with projected fire. It looked SO rad!

JM: What are some of your favorite images you have used, and what are some that you have not used due to being too spooky?

MG: I think it goes without saying that the shadowy figure behind the curtain is a crowd favorite and mine as well. I really like the zombie silhouettes and ghostly apparitions. I also like the neon sign, it was really fun to make. Oh! and the eyes, those are really fun. I've stayed away from really violent imagery and excessive blood and gore. I know that there are other products out there that cater to that style but I'm trying to keep it mostly kid friendly.

JM: What kind of tips can you offer to first timers who get Hallowindow?

MG: Hmm. I think I'd say it's easier to set up than you might think. The biggest hurdle is getting a projector since they are generally not very cheap.

1. Make sure you get a projector that is bright enough. I usually recommend no less than 1800 lumens.
2. Make sure your projection surface is nice and flat and not wrinkly and droopy.
3. Consider how you might set up speakers so that people can hear it. This can get pretty technical but there are more and more wireless speaker options these days. I just use really long speaker wire. Oh, and subwoofers really help get the eerie low range sound pumping...I try to make sure you can feel the thunder on my doorsteps!
4. Get creative! Project it anywhere. Have fun!



TRAPPED IN VIDEO GAME PURGATORY HELLRAISER: VIRTUAL HELL

The 1980s and 1990s was an interesting time for video games, even more so if you were a fan of horror films. Many of the popular franchises received the video game treatment like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Psycho*, *Fright Night*, *Jaws*, and *Alien* – and that's only scraping the tip of the iceberg. (For an in-depth look at the history of horror video games, check out Frank Warden's extensive article in *Shadowland Magazine* #5.)

With the popularity of Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* (1987) a video game tie-in seemed certain – and several attempts were made to bring Pinhead and his Cenobite ilk to home consoles and personal computers. Unfortunately, their fate would be to languish in development hell, not to mention that each effort was accompanied by a history more complex, muddled and bizarre than the inner workings of the Lament Configuration.

The first attempt was made in 1990 by Color Dreams, one of the few video game developers to release unofficially licensed titles for the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System (NES). Some of their games included *Captain Comic* and the occult-themed *Robodemons*. Color Dreams sought to give *Hellraiser* a proper video game adaptation and, knowing the limited processing power of the standard NES cartridge, developed a new 'Super Cartridge' capable of doubling the strength of the NES' processing capacity.

Ultimately, Color Dreams' *Hellraiser* game was scrapped due to how much the project would have cost and the increasing difficulty of getting their unofficially licensed games in stores (Nintendo discouraged retailers from carrying any game without the 'Nintendo Seal of Approval'). For a time Color Dreams had even intended to turn *Hellraiser* into a PC game after having acquired the engine for *Wolfenstein 3D*. As rumor has it, the *Hellraiser* license was close to expiring – though, it

seemed Color Dreams had already decided to take their business approach in a different direction. By 1991 Color Dreams formed Wisdom Tree, a new division to develop Christian-themed games like *Bible Adventures*, *King of Kings: The Early Years*, and *Super 3D Noah's Ark*.



A few years later another video game developer, Konami, expressed interest in making a *Hellraiser* game – albeit only loosely based on the franchise – for the Super Nintendo (and possibly for the PC). In the end it was not to be, and Konami moved on to other projects.

Thus, that brings us to around 1994-1995 and to *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell*, the largest unreleased video game project in the franchise's history and the one closest to overall completion. *Shadowland* was fortunate enough to speak with Doug Barnett, who had been responsible for the game's concept and original treatment, and Stewart Stanyard, *Virtual Hell*'s talented storyboard artist. And so, without further delay, let's open the soul-tearing doors to *Virtual Hell*...



Right: Print ad for Color Dream's unreleased *Hellraiser* game.

DEMONS TO SOME...
ANGELS TO OTHERS!!

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BLOODY HELL

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- THE LARGEST GAME YET
FOR NINTENDO
- OVER ONE HUNDRED DEMONS
TO ESCAPE FROM

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SEGA GENESIS
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DOUG BARNETT

DEVELOPING A VIRTUAL HELL

SHADOWLAND MAGAZINE: How did you originally get involved with working on *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell* and what was your role on the project?

DOUG BARNETT: The success of *Return to Zork* led Hollywood to me, as they were in search of designers for various movie tie-ins. At that time, I had an excellent agent and he arranged the deal with Fifth Avenue Entertainment (*Hellraiser*).

I generally don't watch many horror movies, but when I do I try to pick the best. The *Hellraiser* series surely falls into that category. (I usually lean toward horror spoofs, like *Zombieland* and the *Scream* series.) So when the offer came up, I naturally said yes.

I was responsible for the concept (storyline/plot) and the game's structure, which included characters, action sequences, scenes, game flow – basically, a documented guideline as to what the game was to *be* and *do*. Of course, vital input from members of the team would alter things during game production, which is normal and welcome (usually). The design document was 84 pages with multiple sheets of flowcharts and floor plans. Also included were 338 storyboards drawn by the talented artist Stewart Stanyard, who had previously illustrated a *Hellraiser* comic. It was a nice package.



Proposed box artwork
for *Virtual Hell*.

SM: Can you give us some details on the game's premise, level design, and production? Did any Cenobites from the films make an appearance?

DB: To try and be brief, the player assumes the role of an employee at a company that developed a virtual reality machine, which accurately simulated

both physical and psychological effects in any environment desirable. The lead programmer, Chip (yes, I know...corny), secretly integrates the infamous *Hellraiser* "box" (forgot the actual name of it...I'll never appear on *Jeopardy*) in order to learn how to open it.

This was not a good idea. The box is opened in a virtual world and Pinhead grabs the opportunity to



Doug Barnett (left) with
Doug "Pinhead" Bradley.

occupy it. Pinhead sees it as a means to infiltrate homes (and people) all over the world. Chip is pulled in and followed by a would-be rescuer Janet Perkins (lead program tester). They both become new cenobites.

Each level in the game differed greatly from the others. Sure, there were maze-like areas (hopefully, not obviously so), but mostly expansive environments from mansion interiors to the massive Leviathan canyons, as well as levels with floor plans based on the patterns depicted on the Box. And for the kiddies: lots and lots of morbid, grotesque and horrible ways to be killed. It was a HUGE game and designed to provide many hours of play.

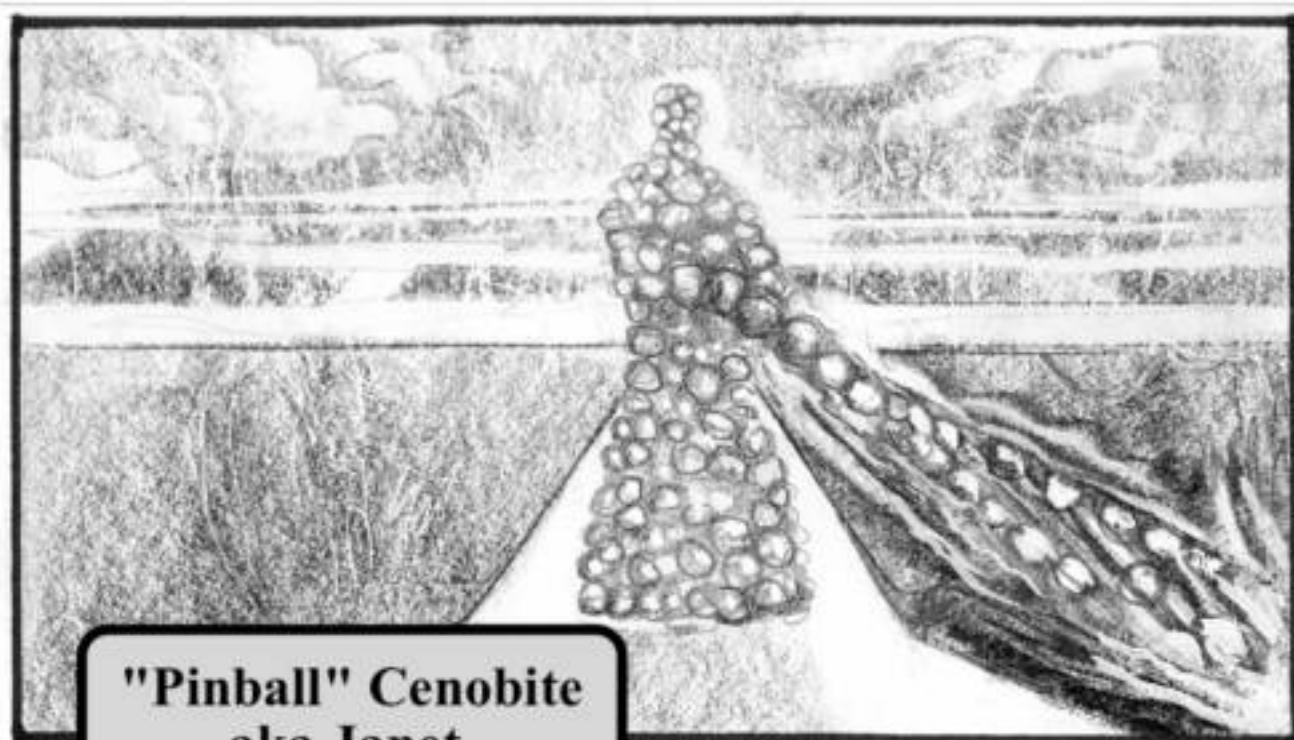


Chip is *cenobitized* into a sick environment of circuitry – a Salvador Dali/*Tron*-like twisted imagery. Janet becomes the Cenobite "Pinball". Her

physical form is thousands of small, metallic spheres which she can completely manipulate and use destructively.

The often scattered balls always returned to reform into her voluptuous female figure. To battle her, you'd better have a big





"Pinball" Cenobite
aka Janet.

Copyright Stewart Stanyard



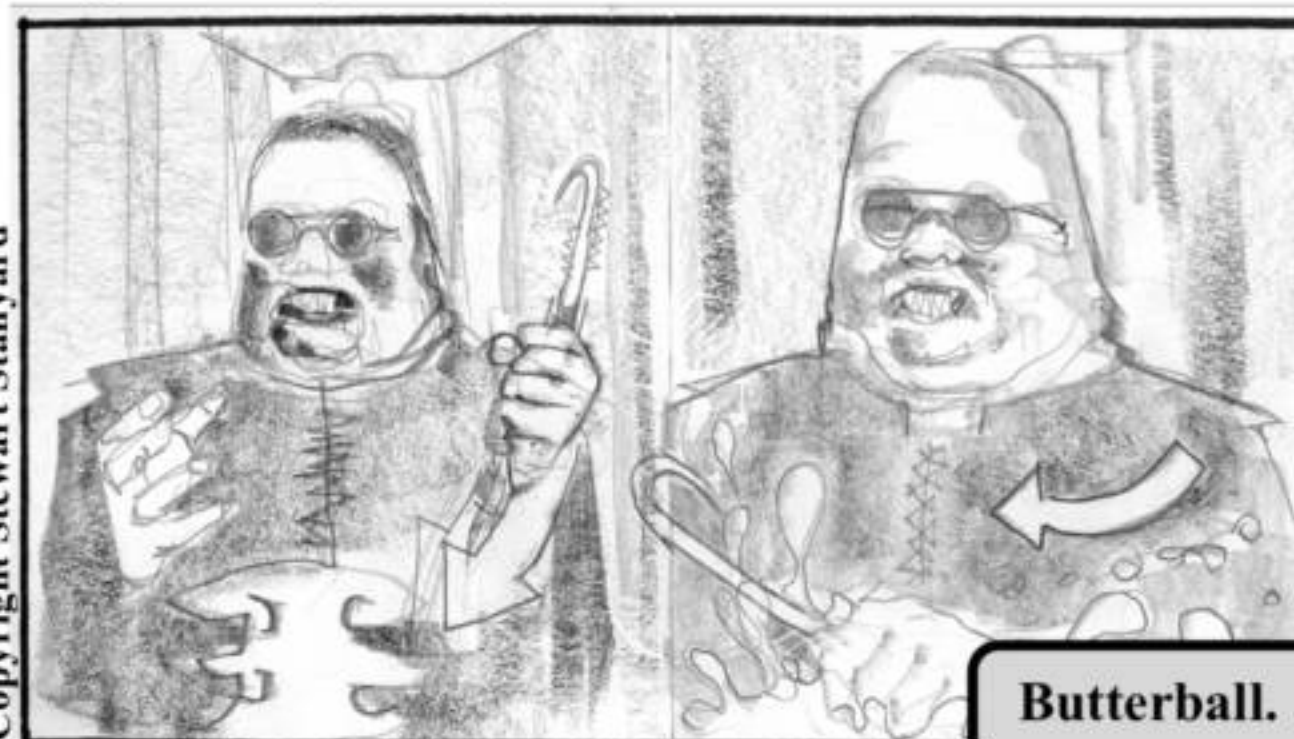
Cenobitized Chip.

Copyright Stewart Stanyard

pair of....never mind.

Indeed, Cenobites from the film series also appear: Butterball, the Chatterer, and the female cenobite whose name escapes me. The hideous, embryo-like Beast also appears, skittering along walls and ceilings to hunt down the player.

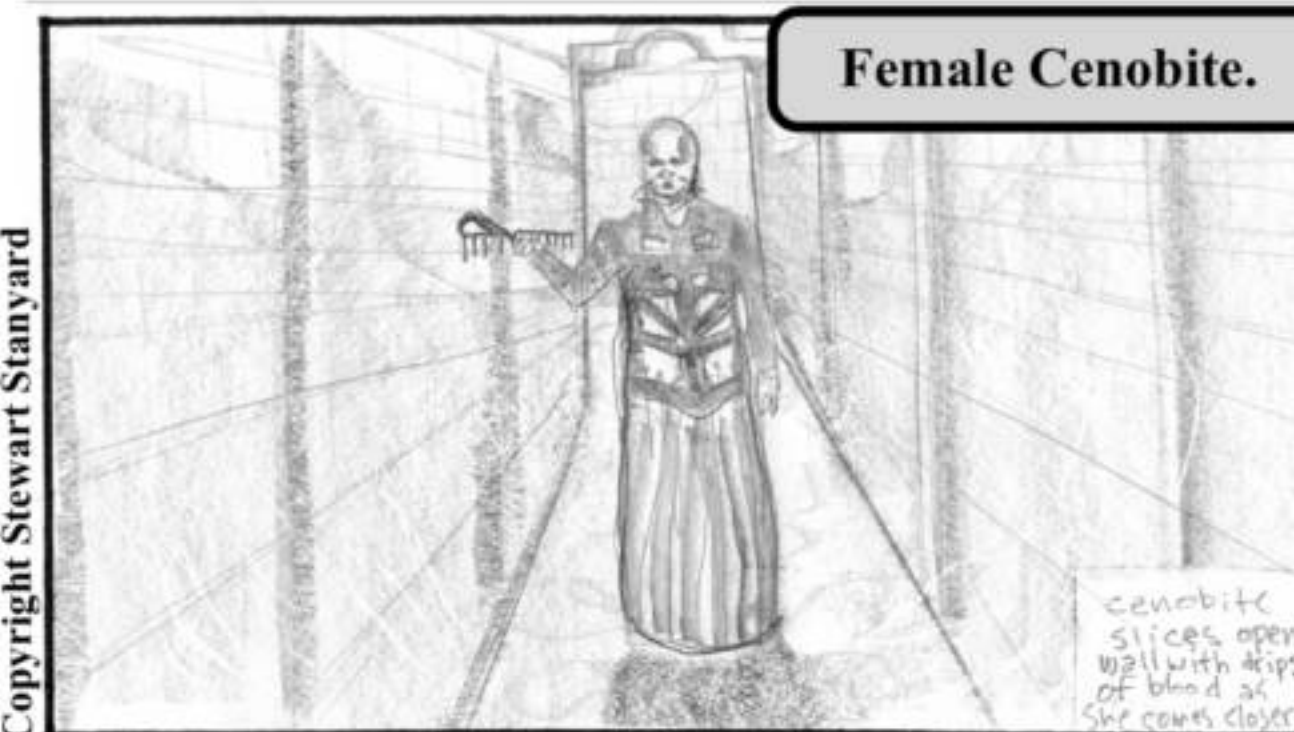
I assumed the other team members would also request the appearance of other favorite Cenobites, and the game design easily allowed for that.



Butterball.



Chatterer.



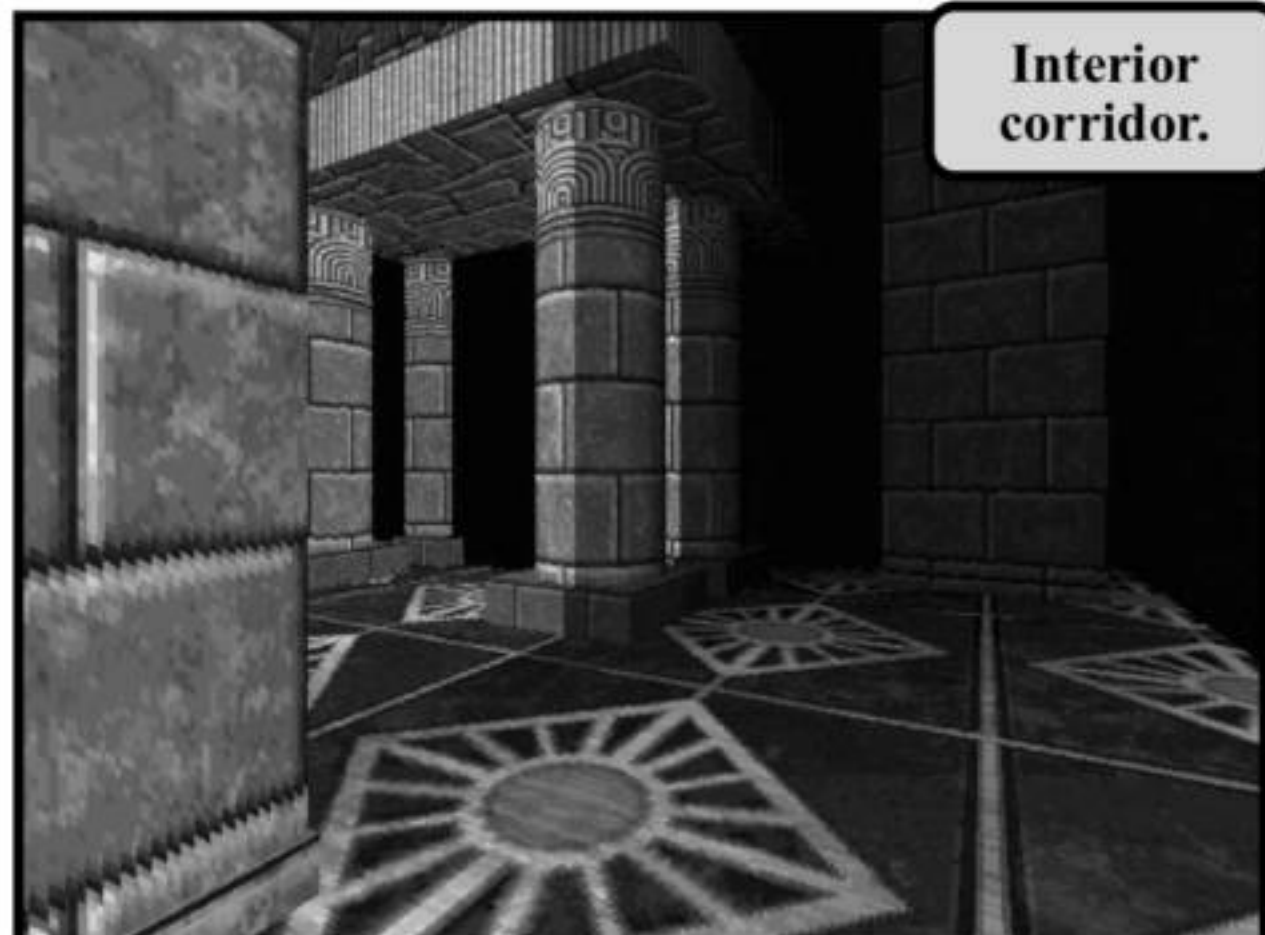
Female Cenobite.

cenobite
slices open
wall with drips
of blood as
she comes closer

SM: What were the FMV sequences like? What was it like working with Doug Bradley (Pinhead) and how long did it take to film his scenes?

DB: Working with Doug Bradley was quite memorable. He's a pro and knew his character thoroughly, which is rather unnerving, if you think about it. I had written all the dialogue, all the lines, so I had to be ready to rewrite on-the-fly should Doug find any of it awkward or out of character. I don't think that happened, but if it had, he would have ad-libbed better than any rewrite. It only took the good part of a day to film all his lines. We green-screened him, which enabled us to insert his image anywhere in the game. What took the most time was the makeup for Pinhead...the hammering went on and on.

SM: What kind of problems did *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell* run into and, ultimately, why was it shelved? How



Interior
corridor.



Wall Beast.

upper legs
move along
walls

Copyright Stewart Stanyard

Storyline

The player assumes the role of an employee at the VR Research Labs, a company dedicated to the development of Virtual Reality entertainment devices. Security is high at VR Labs due to the current feeding frenzy occurring in the hi-tech entertainment industry, and the fact that VR Labs is within a few months of revealing the first working model of a *Multi-Universe Personal Transporter*.

Nicknamed the "Hot Seat", this \$14 million dollar machine could graphically simulate any environment imaginable by man and return all the possible physical, as well as psychological, sensations associated with that environment. Of course, no one could actually prove that there were psychological effects resulting from use of the *Hot Seat*, other than unanimous reports of sheer exhilaration. Since only positive reports were recorded by the testers, the psychological aspects of the simulator were assumed to be merely an exaggeration of its inventor and programmer, Charles "Chip" Reddin.

Chip was a technical genius and, according to others who worked with him, a certifiable lunatic. In the world of technological research and development, as is sometimes said of the art world, this is a totally acceptable and harmless combination. In Chip's case...it was to prove deadly.

One of Chip's hobbies was horror films. There wasn't a horror film ever made that he didn't know all the details about, even as far back as silent films. But the one series of films he favored the most was the *Hellraiser* series. He knew how many nails protruded from Pinhead, the speed in miles-per-hour at which the Chatterer Beast traveled along walls and ceilings, the calculated distance from the Catacombs exit to the base of Leviathan and how many chains hit or missed in each film.

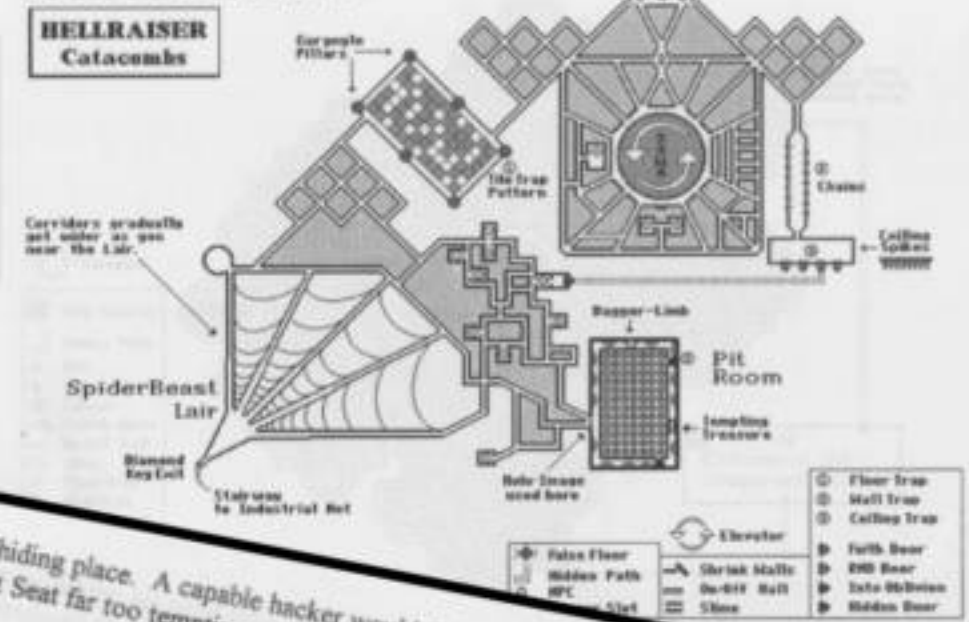
And he knew how to use the Box.

The exact configuration of the Lament Box could not be determined from the movies, but with the computer equipment and knowledge Chip had access to, it was possible to calculate its structure and reproduce it in a 3D program. It took him approximately ten months to complete the 3D Box and this was using one of the most powerful computer system in existence. The same computer system that was used to develop the *Hot Seat*.

No one at VR Labs knew about the Box. No one knew that Chip had programmed the Lament Configuration into the engine that powered the VR device. He had been careful enough to prevent its accidental access by including special coding that required a cheat key to be pressed at a precise moment in the running of the MUPT program. As a secondary precaution, a password was required in order to access his personal journal, which did not mention the cheat key, but did record the progress he made on the Lament Configuration and this information would certainly reveal the MUPT computer system

Original storyline and catacomb levels.

LOWER FLOOR 1



as the hiding place. A capable hacker would find the possible existence of a cheat key in the *Hot Seat* far too tempting to dismiss.

Janet Perkins was just such a hacker. In fact, it was for that very reason that she was hired by VR Labs: to put the *Hot Seat* through the most critical tests possible and expose any programming bugs that might exist in Chip's coding. Janet was the senior playtester for VR Labs.

Janet worked closely with Chip on the project, perhaps closer than anyone else. They were the *Odd Couple* of VR Labs. Chip rarely spoke, spending every available moment tapping away on his keyboard. Janet's lunch breaks were spent slamming the sides of the cafeteria's pinball machines and cussing up a storm whenever she failed to beat her previous scores. Her extreme behavior associated with an imperfect pinball score discouraged anyone from playing along with her. Which was fine with Janet, since she considered everyone else to be far inferior to her anyway and their turn at play would only be regarded as an annoying waste of time.

Both Chip and Janet enjoyed full security clearance at VR Labs and spent many late hours working on their baby. As soon as Chip updated the code, Janet would strap herself into the egg-shaped chair, attaching all the necessary nerve nodes, set the control panel to *Full Run* and put the new program through a rigorous test. No bugs ever showed up during the tests. Until that one fateful early morning.

It was in the middle of August and Chip and Janet preferred working after dark, when it was cooler and quieter. The thick, metal doors of the VR Test Room separated them, allowing Chip to tap away in silence and Janet to shriek and holler as she sailed through the *Hot Seat*'s virtual reality worlds. Time passed quickly during these hours and 3:15 am would have gone unnoticed had it not been for the strange signal that appeared on Chip's computer screen.

Something was wrong. Chip had the computer at his desk hooked directly into the *Hot Seat* and he had installed an alarm system to warn him of unusual behavior in the program. What was Janet doing to trigger the alarm? Had she found a bug in the new code? Had she reached the limits of the *Hot Seat*'s abilities and crashed the program? No. Impossible. The *Hot Seat*'s virtual worlds were so extensive that it would take years to explore them all. Which left only one other possibility: Janet had discovered the cheat key!

Immediately, Chip switched his system to monitor mode. His computer screen filled with the image that Janet was currently experiencing. Janet had indeed broken into Chip's secret area of the system! Displayed on the screen were 3D images of Janet's hands holding a perfectly rendered virtual Lament Configuration Box.

Chip instinctively reached for the shutdown switch. His fingers hovered over the switch. Did he truly believe the 3D Box was dangerous? Or was he just afraid Janet would solve the puzzle of the Box...a feat Chip himself had not yet accomplished?

Chip withdrew his hand from the switch and watched. He watched as Janet's hands manipulated the Box. *Incorrect move, try again.* The Box returned to its original position. A few minutes passed without movement and Chip could almost hear Janet's mind calculating the next move. The hands rotated the Box and fingers slid into a new position. *Click.* The Box shifted...bluish sparks escaped from the gaps of the Box. Again, Chip watched as Janet's fingers maneuvered slowly into new positions then stopped.

This was as far as Janet would get, thought Chip. He noted the positions of Janet's fingers and smiled. That move had already been tried. It wouldn't work. Chip knew more about the Box than anyone, certainly more than Janet, and this was as far as Chip had gotten. Janet's fingers moved again into new positions. What was this? What could moving the thumb in a circular motion over the center of the Box possibly accomplish?

Click. Beads of sweat began to stream down Chip's face. *My God, he thought, what have I allowed to happen?* The Box, responding to the circular motions, suddenly rose above Janet's hands. Part of the Box slid upwards, stopped, then rotated clockwise and stopped again. More sparks shot out from the gaps. Papers suddenly flew off Chip's desk, as though a window had been opened and a strong wind had swept through the office.

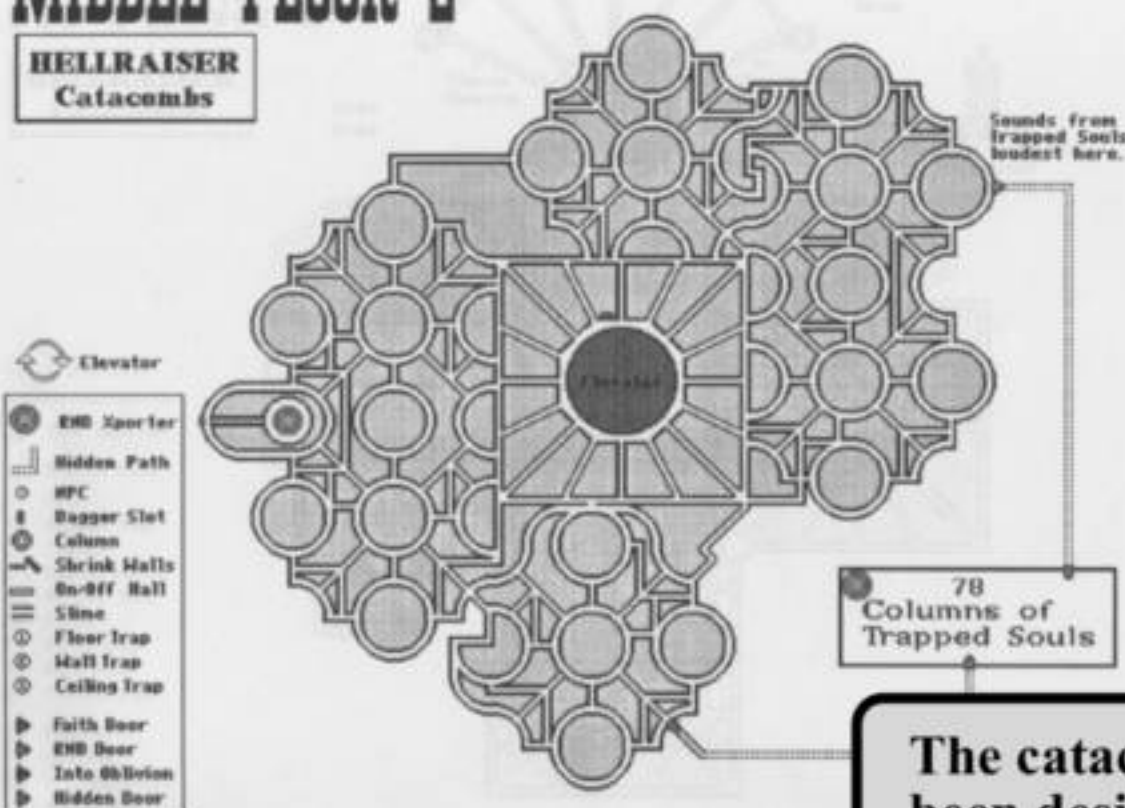
Chip was mesmerized. He stared at the screen and watched the strange distortions occurring in the background of the Box. The Box rotated again and the separated section slid back into the other half. All around the still Box blue lightning-like streams shot out and the entire virtual world twisted and morphed into a chaotic mass of colors. Then, just as suddenly, it stopped. The Box tilted toward the screen. The round, gold center of the design began to open, like a flower awakening to a new day, exposing an interior so black...so deep...that it seemed to stretch into Infinity. Chip leaned forward and gazed into the hole. A shape was forming. A face.

Pinhead!

"Welcome to Virtual Hell...now...let's really play!"

MIDDLE FLOOR 2

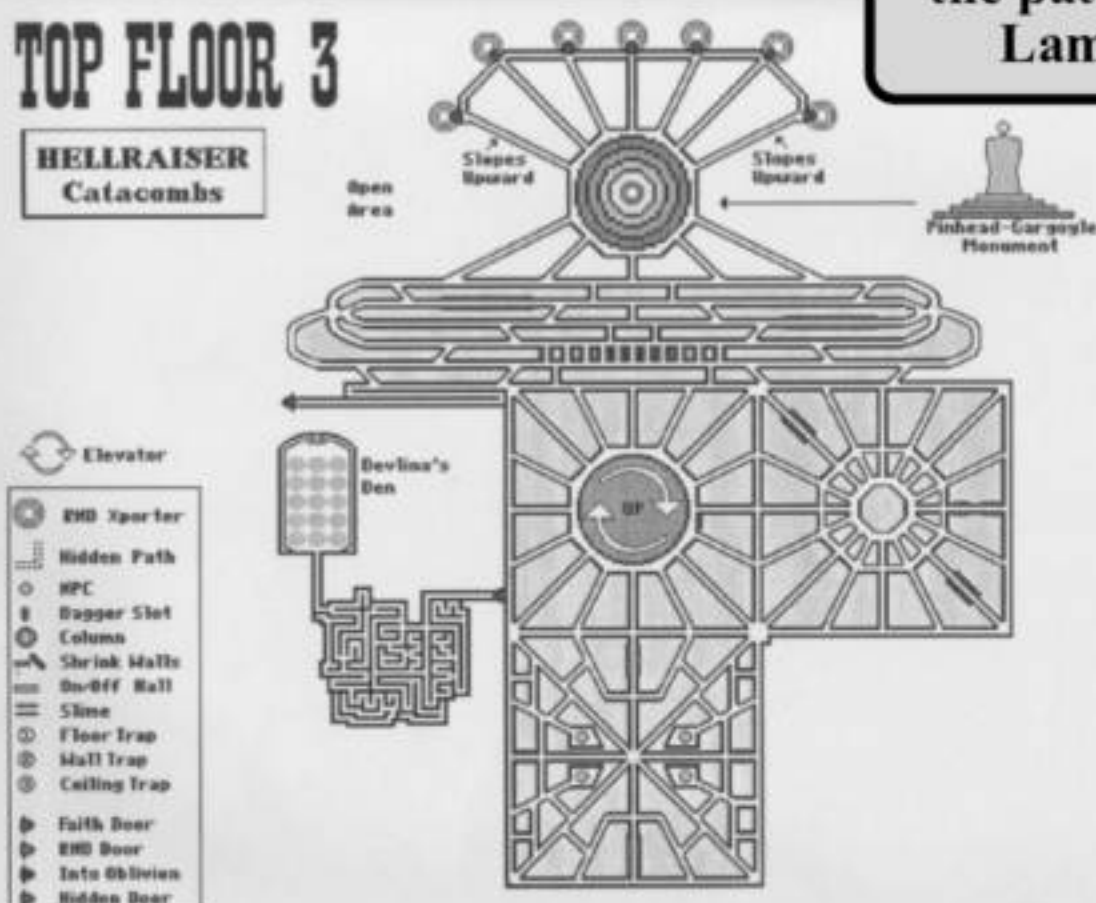
HELLRAISER Catacombs



The catacombs had been designed after the patterns on the Lament Box.

TOP FLOOR 3

HELLRAISER Catacombs



much of the game was completed prior to it being cancelled?

DB: From my point of view, the problems with production grew from within Magnet Interactive Studios, where the game was being developed. I flew to the Magnet offices in Georgetown and met the team members assigned to the project. The artists were fantastic and their style perfect. The programming team was more than capable of coding a state-of-the-art game, and I felt comfortable knowing such people were on the project. All looked good, and the talent overwhelming...until I met the producer.

I won't mention the producer's name, as I hold no grudges, but he was afflicted with a common symptom in the game business: runaway ego. So many producers (mostly) are wannabe designers, but don't want the tedious task of actually doing the job. This always baffled me, as being a good producer is admirable in itself. I believe in teamwork, with each aspect of the project being entrusted to the best person to handle it. I was hired to design the game because every game I designed had been a hit (flaws and all).

The producer's job is to keep the production process going smoothly and efficiently, which is tough enough. However, that doesn't seem to satisfy some egos, so they insert themselves into the design aspect (and other areas as well) and use their authority to interject their own visions. Input from every team member is, and always should be, welcomed. But producers are usually of a different breed than those of designers, artists, et cetera and are often influenced by factors that can stifle creative envelope-pushing. And some are sneaky.

Communications with Magnet set off alarms early on, with meetings cancelled and phone calls avoided or ignored completely. Behind the scenes, the producer was making major changes to the project without conferring with me or Fifth Avenue Entertainment. Fifth Avenue was paying me good money to get a best-selling title on the market...and the producer was producing his own thing, which turned out to be a tired, been-done-before game. He even started calling himself the designer (some blogs list him as such). In some interviews with the artists and other team members, they openly complained about the design and the designer. They certainly weren't talking about me,

because I had never heard of the things they complained about. That went over like a kazoo player at a heavy metal concert...I was ready to maim.

There were more early warnings, such as filming *Pinhead* too soon, which meant I had to anticipate *every* line in advance of production, thus poo-pooing design flexibility and future team input. The costs would be over budget if *Pinhead* had to be called back.

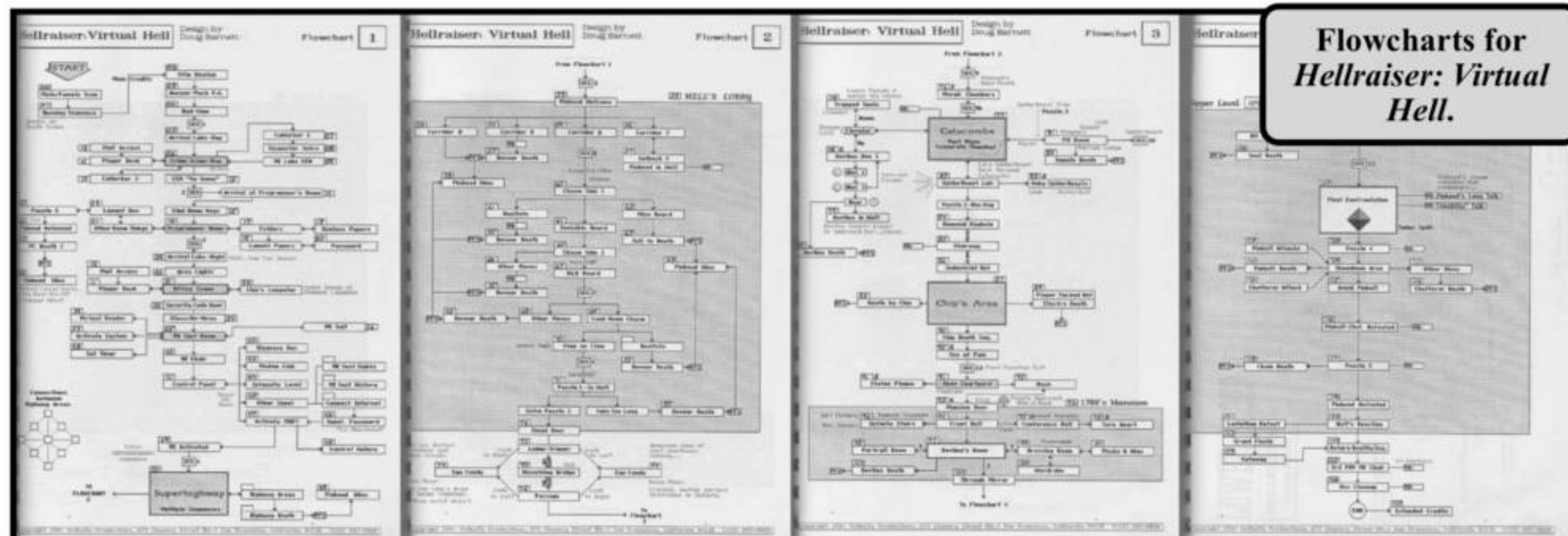
I also remember one meeting where the producer suggested we include a lavatory where the toilets flushed and monsters were hidden in the stalls (um...ever hear of *Doom* or *Duke Nukem*, dude?). I politely asked what kind of monsters, what were their characteristics and what kind of challenges would they present the player. He merely replied that they should be "cool". I remember the assistant producer (female) groaning. I instantly liked her. When the meeting was over and I flew back to CA, I assumed his negatively received ideas were off the table. I was wrong...he went ahead and started implementing his version anyway.

By the time this problem came to light, it was too late...the game was a disaster and too far along to be changed back. I was asked to redesign around the mess, but it was impossible. I also heard that Magnet had over-reached their budget, but I don't know if that's true. Anyway, the project imploded.

I will always regret its demise. Fifth Avenue Entertainment and the worthy artists, programmers and other team members didn't deserve that.

SM: Dimension Films/Miramax had been in production of the fourth *Hellraiser* film, *Bloodline*, around the same time *Virtual Hell* was also in production. Were there any requirements to tie the game in with the film? Alternatively, did the film studio have any demands regarding the story or concept? Any restrictions?

DB: I had no idea *Bloodline* was in production (perhaps the producer did), so there weren't any tie-ins suggested. The only requirement was that Fifth Avenue be contacted if a new *Hellraiser* element were to enter into the design, such as another Cenobite. The head of Fifth Avenue Entertainment was very trusting and a pleasure to deal with...he just wanted a good game made of a good license. He seemed quite pleased with the storyline I had presented in the design document.



SM: Did Clive Barker ever have any input on the game?

DB: No, unfortunately Clive Barker was not involved in the game process, as far as I know. As I mentioned, the communications with Magnet Interactive was dismal, so if they contacted him I was left out of the loop. It would have been great to have had the opportunity to brainstorm with Barker. A shame it didn't happen.

SM: Any other stories or experiences you'd like to share about working on *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell*?

DB: During the filming of Pinhead's dialogue, we broke for lunch and I sat next to Doug Bradley. He was still in full wardrobe as we ate. Try to imagine how hilarious it was to watch Pinhead maneuvering a forkful of salad past a maze of nails, and he was limited as to how wide he could open his mouth. No problem, though, for Doug...the man had obviously developed a new skill.

SM: You've also worked on the 1989 *Ghostbusters II* game for the PC. How was that experience in relation to the one you had with *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell*?

DB: Totally different animals. I was hired as an employee of Activision for this project, as they thought that would ensure secrecy. Secrecy, of course, is a joke in such an incestuous industry. I always kept my word and remained mum on production content, which inevitably made me look like the clueless one. I

Box Moves

Manipulating the Lament Box (in either the Real World or the Virtual World) is done by using careful placement of fingers and applying pressure, pulling at sides, rubbing with the thumbs or a combination of these.

The three sides of the Box (with duplicate opposite sides) are:



The Moves (Puzzles) for manipulating the Lament Box:

* Finger or Pressure points and activated sections are highlighted.

Puzzle 1 - Freeing Lost & Wandering Souls:



Puzzle 2 - Diamond Key:

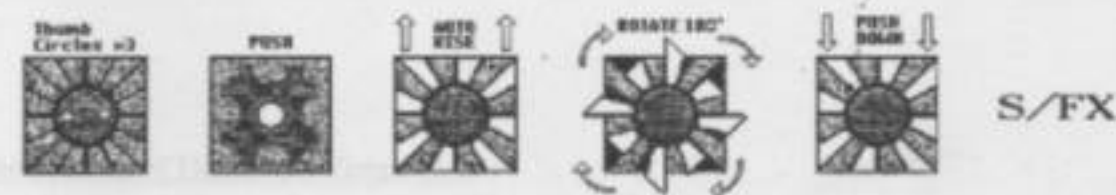


Illustrations showing the exact moves using the Lament Box in the game. Different combinations would have been required for various situations.

Puzzle 3 - Holographic Image:



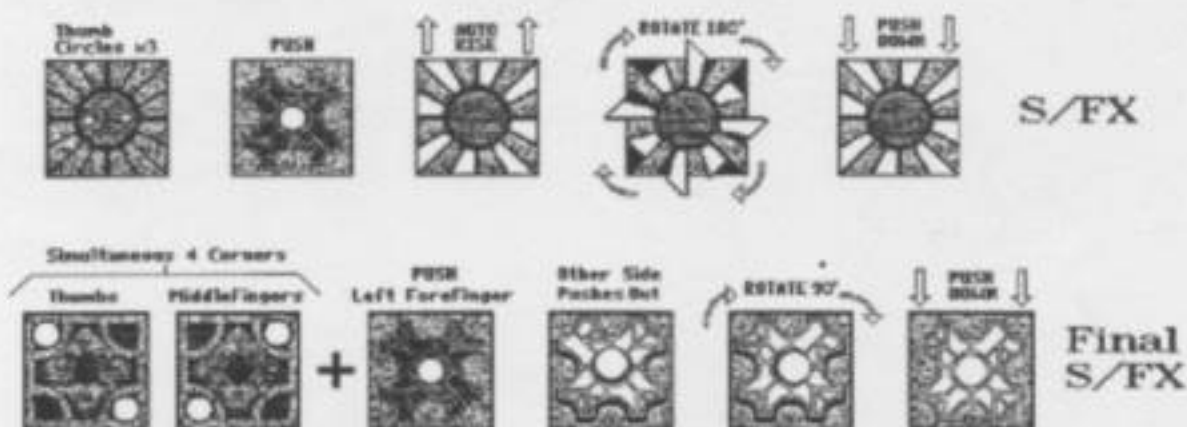
Puzzle 4 - First 1/2 Final Confrontation:



Puzzle 5 - Second 1/2 (complete) Final Confrontation:



Puzzle 6 - Combined Puzzles 4 & 5 Using Real Box:



In the game the player would have actually manipulated the box in the first person.

designed all the scenes and action in that game, and was right there to see it developed. Superb artists and a superb producer (David Koch) were at Activision, so it was delightful. The only problem I saw was in the development team at Dynamix. Dynamix had a contract for a certain number of games to be published by Activision, and I believe they were anxious to be on their own, so they rushed the process a bit. As a result, the game had moments when it felt somewhat *stiff*. I have always been a big fan of the original *Ghostbusters* movie; one of my all-time favorites. I also did the animated title screen for the game...I have this thing for title screens and logos.

SM: Have you seen *Hellraiser: Hellworld* (2005)? The film's premise focuses on a virtual online gaming community called *Hellworld*, which is based on the *Hellraiser* franchise. Of course, the gamers soon find out that the 'fictional' world of *Hellraiser* is more real than they could have imagined. Do you think that *Virtual Hell* could have been a template for the film?

DB: I have not seen *Hellworld*, but the premise does ring familiar, doesn't it? If my approach had influenced the film, I have no beef with that. I wish I had been involved in the scripting, which would have been fun, but that was not my call. Perhaps I'll rent it and see what's up, but it wouldn't bother in the least if it did derive from my

design. It would be a compliment and I would be happy that Fifth Avenue got something out of the game fiasco.

SM: Are there any new projects that you're currently working on that you would like to share with us?

DB: Due to a near-fatal illness, I had removed myself from the game business after 2001. Fortunately, I beat the odds and have recovered completely. Now I am currently writing a humorous fantasy series (novels) and collaborating on two (hopefully three) children's books with the award-winning artist Jeannie Vodden. I am quite

excited about these books and working with Jeannie is absolutely wonderful. She's quite a pro. And NO...one of the children's books isn't *Hellraiser: Kiddie Hell*.

I have recently been approached to design a "part 2" of an earlier game that was a big hit, but I can't divulge the title as yet. Dumb to bring it up then, huh? But if it pans out, then I'll probably do it, as I already have a solid approach in mind. We'll see. The game industry has changed quite a bit; there are teams of designers now (games are larger). And the 'rat race' isn't as appealing as it once had been. Only The Shadow knows...



STEWART STANYARD

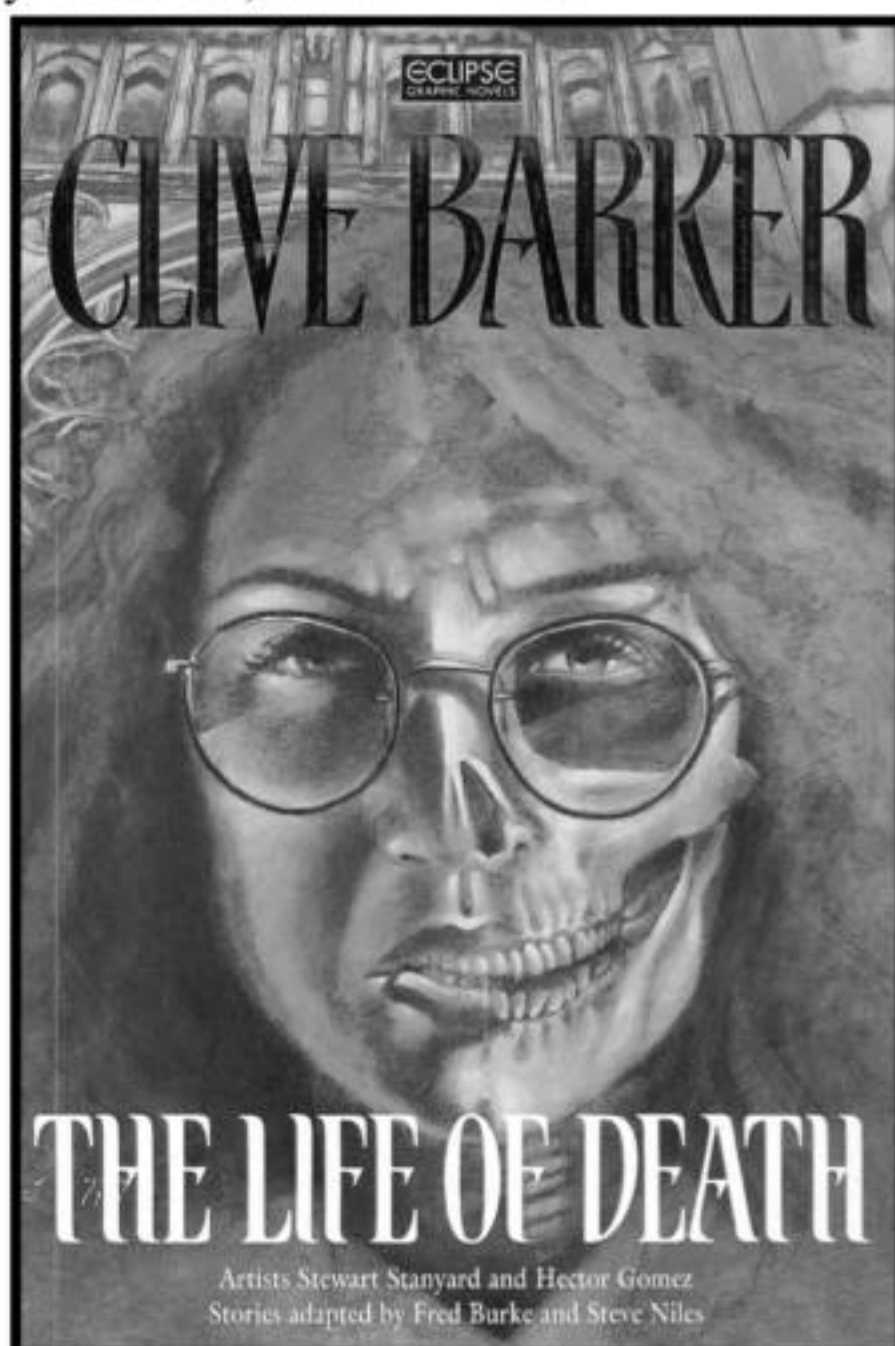
SHADOWLAND MAGAZINE: What led to your involvement as a storyboard artist on *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell*? Prior to working on the project, were you a fan of the *Hellraiser* franchise?

STEWART STANYARD: At the time of the first *Hellraiser* film, I'd been working as a freelance illustrator in the San Francisco Bay Area for close to a decade, having illustrated magazines articles, book covers and such. My interest in the genres of horror, fantasy and sci-fi were rooted as a child growing up during the Monster Boom of the early 70's. So, at an early age, I had been hooked on tons of monster movies including everything from the Universal Monsters and Godzilla, and movies such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, to lots of television shows like *The Outer Limits*, *Star Trek*, and of course, *The Twilight Zone*. I also read a lot of Ray Bradbury books and classic horror comics like *House of Secrets*, *House of Mystery*, *The Witching Hour*, *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and anything illustrated by Berni Wrightson. In the early 80's I started reading Stephen King's novels and then went onto Clive Barker's work. The first time I ever saw *Hellraiser* it totally crept me out! I think I had nightmares for a week about Pinhead coming through my bedroom walls. Anyways, in the early 90's I illustrated a Clive Barker graphic novel, *The Life of Death*, and

THE ART OF HELL

a few years later, game designer Doug Barnett came along with the unique *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell* game project. Since I was also a gamer, I was ecstatic with the gig of working on a *Hellraiser* game.

SM: What was the developer of *Virtual Hell*, Magnet Interactive, looking for in terms of storyboards? Were you given free reign with character designs, level décor, etc?



SS: I worked closely with game designer, Doug Barnett, where together we aimed to create a design that felt like it could have been a chapter in the *Hellraiser* universe. Barnett wrote up an excellent storyline and a full design doc with flow-chart for me to follow in coming up with the visual design storyboards. Our aim was to stay very true to Barker's work, not only in incorporating elements directly from the films, but also to have the game *feel* like it was one of the films. We of course used the Cenobites, the mechanisms – including the Lament puzzle box as the player's tool – along with environments from the films, the creepy halls and such and the Leviathan. Barnett's unique storyline plotted Pinhead and his cronies



**Hell's Lobby – establishing shot, dimly lit –
Pinhead welcomes the player.**

making contact through the virtual world, with the player acting as an investigator who gets plunged into the *Hellraiser* universe and must solve the chaos that ensues. So yes, Barnett and myself were given free reign to come up with whatever would work and feel right for a *Hellraiser* game.

However, after our extensive design work was completed, things took an odd turn when we flew back east to meet with the Magnet Interactive team. The creative artists assigned to the project were talented people who dug our design work and wanted to create something good. Although in our meetings with the producer for the project, he stated that he didn't care to look through the visuals I'd created, even though the visuals were specifically designed to coincide with the design doc. He said he only wanted to hear the ideas and basic game design and simply visualize it all in his mind's eye. I remember thinking that here I had created all of this work and the producer didn't even want to see it? What we found out later was

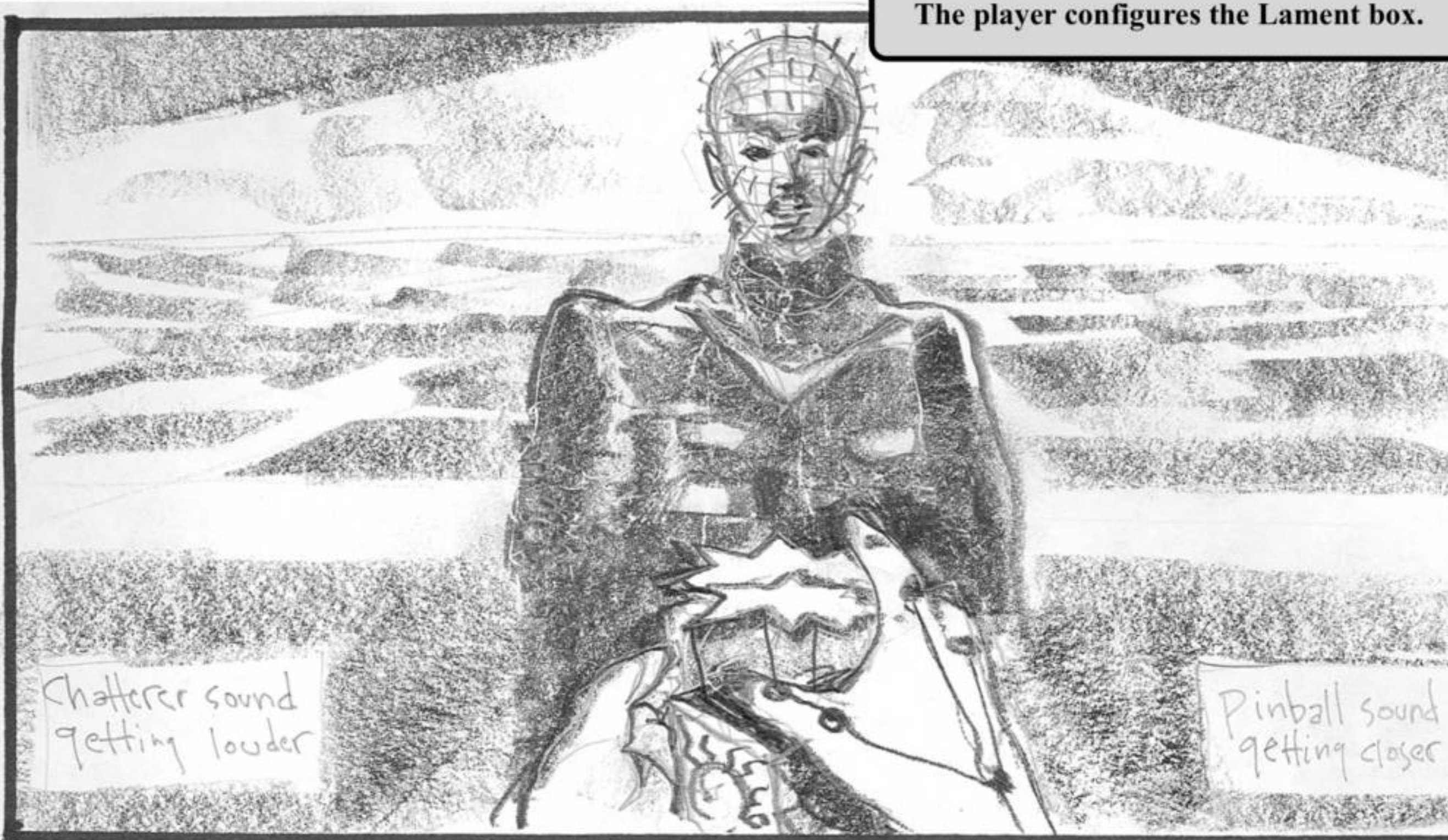
**Moaners – tortured victims, corpses, skeletons,
some are still alive.**



**The Industrial Net –
a lowering tower that shoots chains, which the
player must dodge.**

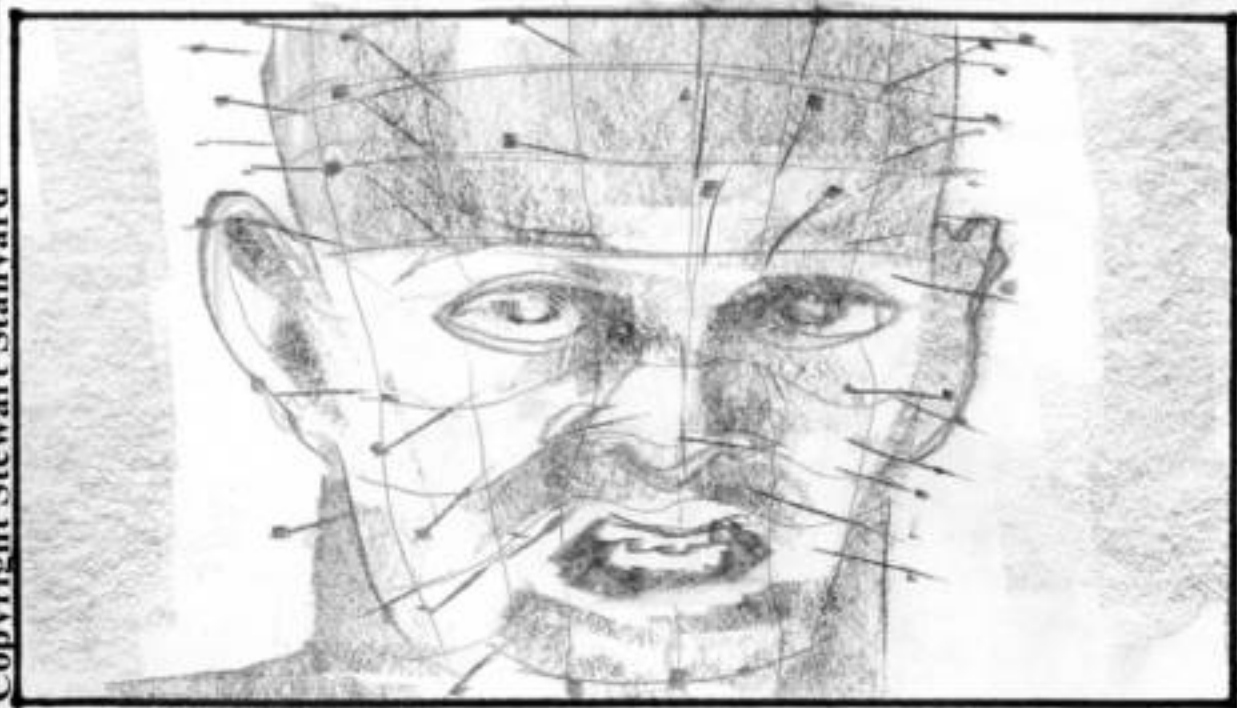


The player configures the Lament box.



VIRTUAL HELL STORYBOARD SEQUENCE

Copyright Stewart Stanyard



1. Close-up – Pinhead Final Speech – player lost.

Copyright Stewart Stanyard



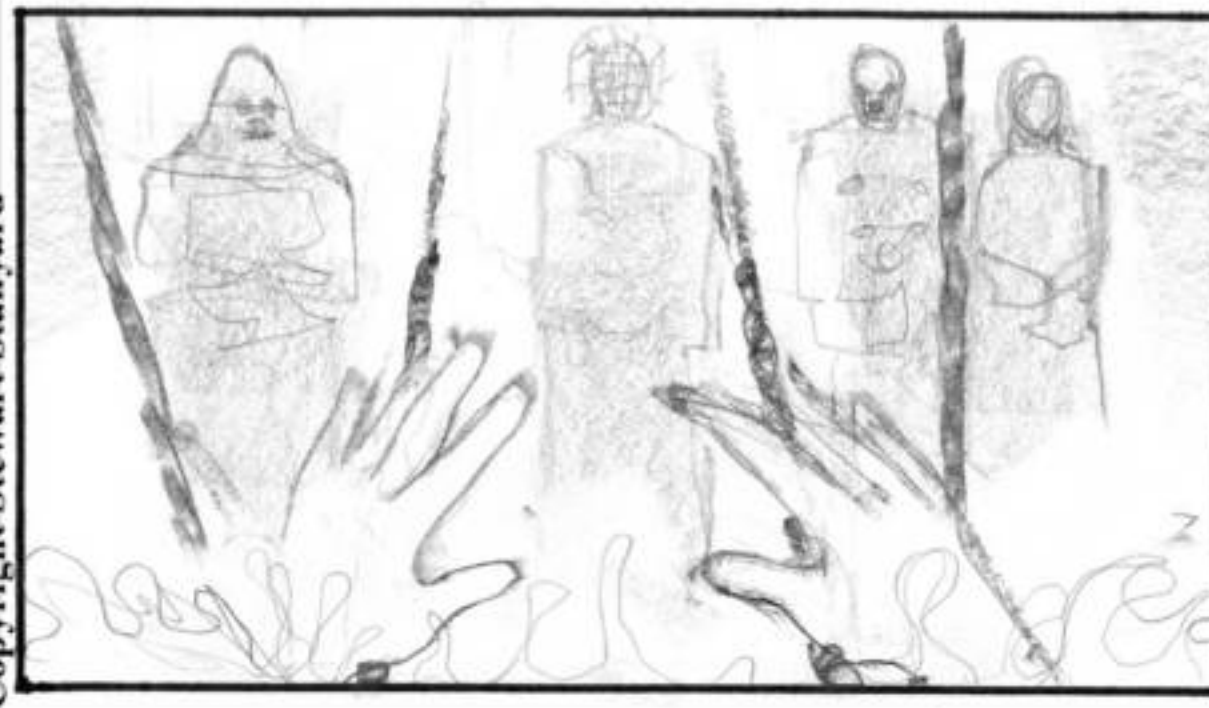
2. Chains slash into user's chest – towards face, hands.

Copyright Stewart Stanyard



3. Hooks pull and rip face and hands – hook cuts.

Copyright Stewart Stanyard



4. Close-up – Chains making contact with player.

Copyright Stewart Stanyard



5. PC Death 1 – Close-up – Body ripped apart in goriness.

turned it into something else entirely. Barnett told me later that there was even talk from the producer of adding restrooms in the *Hellraiser* universe, and having monsters spring out of them. It was madness! So, you can see why this project died. It was headed up by a producer who wanted to fuel his ego with his own take on the thing. If Magnet Interactive had simply followed the well thought-out designs they paid us to do, the project could have actually seen fruition. But sadly, that was not the case.

SM: By the end of the project, how much artwork had you completed for the game?

SS: I had come up with close to 350 storyboards and designs for the project. The storyboards incorporated a storyline element with the police investigation that takes place in the real world, along with the entire *Hellraiser* environment and the key places and puzzles that take place there. I came up with visuals for the look of the world, including the established Cenobites along with several added creatures, and all kinds of traps and things to keep the player guessing. There were also some visual designs for the virtual devices and such. Something very cool was how we designed the player to only be armed with the Lament puzzle box for protection and ways to solve problems or defeat creatures in Virtual Hell. Rather than giving the player a

he wanted to see what he could pick and choose from our designs to slyly create his own. Another sign of the project going off kilter was the intro movie for the game, which was so far from the mark, it wasn't funny. For some reason the *Hellraiser* world they envisioned had Pinhead in an environment predominantly colored in red hues, in an interpretation of Hell with flowing molten lava. Think about it – Barker created his *Hellraiser* realm predominately colored in cold lifeless blue and gray hues, not red! The only place the color red ever existed in *Hellraiser* is in the gore and blood! I think Magnet Interactive even brought in some religious writer who used a bunch of quotes from the Bible and



The player is pulled in by Devilina.

gun and create another run of the mill shooter, we tried to, again, keep it all in the framework established with Barker's films. Later on, another of Magnet Interactive's goofy takes was to give the player guns. A gun in a *Hellraiser* world just makes no sense at all. I mean, if you think about it logically, guns would not work in Hell. I mean its *Hell*! All in all, it's really a shame that that project turned into a losing battle.

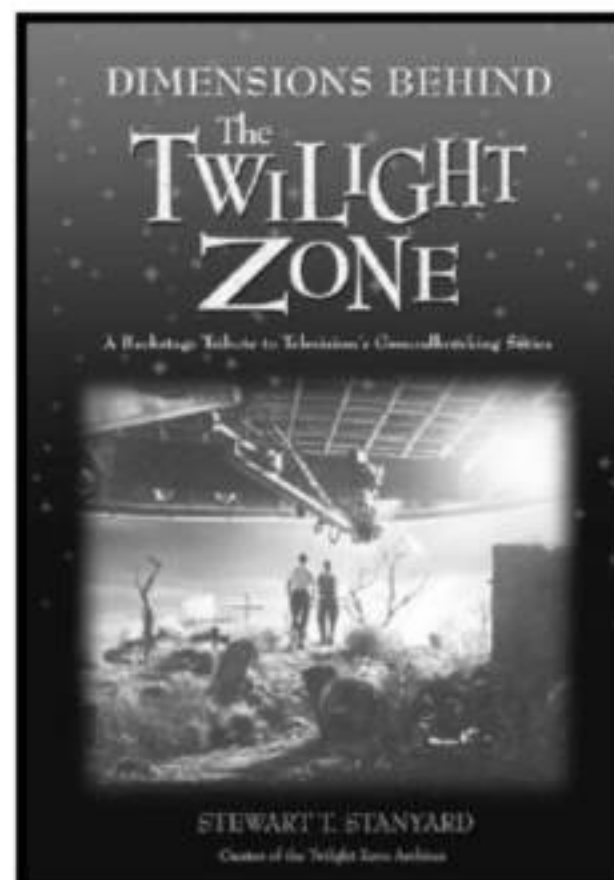
SM: *Virtual Hell* wasn't the only time you worked on a Clive Barker related project. You lent your artistic talents to a graphic novel adaptation of Barker's short story *The Life of Death*. Could you tell us a little about your experience with that?

SS: Illustrating *The Life of Death* was a great thrill for me. Barker worked with Eclipse Enterprises to create unique graphic novels adapted from some of his short stories, unlike Marvel's *Hellraiser* series of comics that, while cool, had nothing at all to do with Barker's actual writing. Barker handpicked the artists to work on his Eclipse graphic novels. So, you can imagine how thrilled I was to hear that he liked my work enough to hand pick me to illustrate for him! *The Life of Death* is mostly a psychological thriller. In comparison to most of Barker's work, it was more terror driven rather than being big on a lot of visual horror and gore – with the exception of a plague pit in an old crypt. It's actually quite a creepy and perverse story. I remember I did roughs for the story, which were all approved by the editor, and then worked on the painted pages directly thereafter. I worked during the day and night, although, working at night seemed more appropriate to the subject matter. Looking at it 20 years later, I think some of my earlier work tended to be not quite as opaque as it is now. It's of course cool and everything, and I still dig most of the stuff I had done in there, especially the crypt scenes and the development of the characters and the painterly things I'd done with it. I think the graphic novel still holds up for readers, but you know us artists, we tend to be our own worst critics. I always loved the cover on that one. I think it works very well and still holds up for me 100%. An interesting thing about that project is, after it was published, I was then slated to illustrate another of Barker's graphic novels for Eclipse based on his story, *Confessions of a Pornographer's Shroud*. However it never happened because the company went under shortly after. It was really a shame because Eclipse was a great group of people and they

did a lot of great work. I would have loved to have worked on that story because it was the polar opposite to *The Life of Death*, in that it was so absolutely, brutally gory, in comparison. All in all, I'm proud to be a footnote in Clive Barker's work.

SM: While *Hellraiser* has quite the following, let's talk about another extremely popular franchise: *The Twilight Zone*. You run *The Twilight Zone Archives* website (active for 13 years!), you've worked as a board member on the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation, and authored the critically acclaimed book, *Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone: A Backstage Tribute to Television's Groundbreaking Series*. What started your interest in Serling's famed show?

SS: The first time I remember seeing *The Twilight Zone*, was back when I was about 9 or 10 years old – the episode was *Nightmare at 20,000 Feet*. When I was 15, I saved enough money to buy a 19-inch B&W television and hooked it up in my bedroom. Every night at 11pm, like clockwork, I watched *The Twilight Zone* and was always amazed, shocked, terrified and sometimes even aware of how poignant life can be. Rod Serling was the pinnacle of brilliance. He brought true literature into a medium that was not at all literature oriented. All of his work dealt with the human condition but was usually disguised under the device of martians, robots or some other fantasy or sci-fi element. So it was palatable without being preachy. And the stories, my god, they were so inventively imaginative! His work influenced a plethora of shows ever since, and you'll find that most of today's big creators will mention how Serling was a big influence. I started *The Twilight Zone Archives* non-profit organization 13 years ago, with an aim to promote the work of Rod Serling and share the various rarities, like rare behind-the-scenes photos and props I'd collected over the years. Since then, amazingly enough, it's become the #1 *Twilight Zone* website. Along with my book, *Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone* – which features over 300 rare on-set photos, informative interview materials, author chapters and Hollywood appreciation essays, and has recently seen a second print run – I think I've met my goal of giving something back to Rod Serling and all those who worked on the series. And for that, I feel privileged. My favorite episode will always be *To Serve Man*.



SM: Despite *The Twilight Zone* ending its initial run back in 1964, the lasting appeal of the series has never faded and many of the episodes have become iconic in their own right. With so many television shows that come and go, what was it that made *The Twilight Zone* withstand the test of time?

SS: *The Twilight Zone* is truly a timeless piece of

modern art that will never fade away. I believe its timelessness is due in part to the fact that it acknowledged the audience as having a brain and the ability to think. The series was way ahead of its time. As an anthology, it had the ability to express unique stories created by a team of brilliant writers – including Rod Serling, Charles Beaumont, Richard Matheson, George Clayton Johnson and a few others. The set of 156 episodes were created to not only make us think, but also, blow our minds. Another element of its timelessness is the show's high level of artistic quality. It was expertly crafted by talented filmmakers and a group of experienced old-school directors who worked on classic film-noir and horror films, as well as some new young directors fresh and ready to create. It featured a plethora of excellent actors who had previously crafted their art on stage and in film. Everything about *The Twilight Zone* is as close to perfection as one could possibly find from a television series. Over the years, others have tried to revive *The Twilight Zone*, but they all naturally pale in comparison. One thing they always get wrong is they don't film these revivals in B&W, which was a key element to the show's magic. One thing for sure, no one can ever fill the shoes of Rod Serling. Luckily his work will live on and continue to marvel and influence generations to come. As actor Bill Mummy so aptly put it in my book, "Rod Serling is immortal."

SM: Any current projects that you're working on that you would like to share with our readers?

SS: I'd been working on a *Twilight Zone* television special with Goal Productions called, *Beyond the Twilight Zone*, but that had been put on the back-burner.

Currently, I'm getting back to working on a novel I had started a couple of years ago. It's an interesting take on the subject of sentience, in a story that bridges the gap between human consciousness and the basic animal mind. It's a unique kind of "what if" idea, and yeah, it's sort of a *Twilight Zone*-ish tale. Other than that, I spend a lot of my creative time working on creature designs, figurative paintings, sketches and painting ideas. One thing I'd like to do is offer consultation work to the next Hollywood filmmaker who aims at creating a new *Twilight Zone*.

Shadowland Magazine would like to thank both Mr. Barnett and Mr. Stanyard for participating in these interviews, and for offering such fantastic photos, concept art, and storyboards of Hellraiser: Virtual Hell.



"Looking through these behind-the-scenes photos brings back many fond memories of Rod Serling and those early days working on such a remarkable piece of television history."

— William Shatner
("Nick of Time" and "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet")

ecwpress.com

A visually stunning backstage glimpse into the history and making of Rod Serling's classic television series, *Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone* includes rare documents, over 350 original behind-the-scenes photographs, and tributes from several creative Hollywood personalities.

DIMENSIONS BEHIND THE TWILIGHT ZONE

The book also features informative and analytical chapters by the author and a plethora of interviews with alumni such as Bert Granet, Richard Donner, Richard Matheson, along with several veteran actors, as well as candid interviews with Carol Serling and Rod's brother, Robert Serling.

KING OF THE SATURDAY MORNING MONSTERS

HANNA-BARBERA'S

GODZILLA

ANIMATED SERIES



By Daniel DeAngelo

"Up from the depths...thirty stories high...breathing fire...his head in the sky...Godzilla! Godzilla! Godzilla...and Godzoo-ky! Godzilla-ahh!!" So went the opening theme to Hanna-Barbera's animated *Godzilla* cartoon series, which ran on NBC Saturday mornings from 1978 to 1981. Executive producers William Hanna and Joe Barbera – best known for creating such cartoon stars as Yogi Bear and the Flintstones – were responsible for bringing Godzilla's adventures into the world of animation. Often looked down upon by some hardcore G-fans, the Hanna-Barbera series – while bearing little resemblance to the Toho films that inspired it – was entertaining in its own right, especially considering the standards of Saturday morning television at the time it was produced.

During the late 1970's, Godzilla was being cast as a defender of mankind – both in the Toho films and Marvel comic books of the time – so the cartoon series reflected this. Following popular misconceptions, Godzilla was colored green instead of gray and breathed real fire like a dragon as opposed to his traditional atomic ray (but then, Godzilla's nuclear origins were not going to be addressed on Saturday morning children's programming). Godzilla was also given a new super-power in the cartoons: the ability to shoot laser beams from his eyes. The series made no attempt to

follow continuity from the Toho films and pitted Godzilla against a variety of new monsters rather than traditional foes like King Ghidorah and Mechagodzilla, presumably for the same reason they were not used in the comics at the time – because Toho wanted to license each individual monster for the same price as Godzilla.

In the animated series, Godzilla is the protector of an ocean-going, scientific research vessel called the Calico. Aboard the ship is its Captain, Carl Majors; female scientist, Dr. Quinn Darian; Quinn's young nephew, Pete; and

Opening title for Hanna-Barbera's *Godzilla*.



assistant Brock. The Calico's equipment includes an amphibious hovercraft, mini-sub, a helicopter, and a host of sophisticated electronics equipment. The ship, which usually cruises along at a normal pace, can also jet across the water on hydrofoil struts at high speeds when necessary.



The 1970's Marvel *Godzilla* comic.



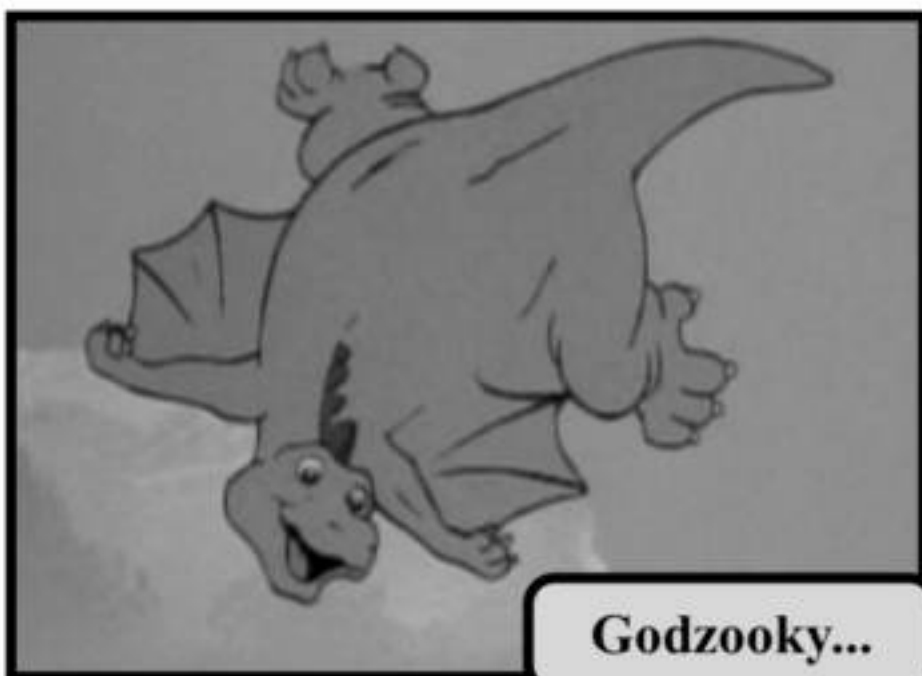
Left to right: Carl Majors, Quinn Darian, Brock & Pete.

The Calico.



Also aboard the ship is Godzooky (an obvious stand-in for Minya, who was owned by Toho), whose exact relationship to

Godzilla is never made clear in the series. Some sources have referred to Godzooky as being Godzilla's "nephew" in the longstanding tradition of single male cartoon characters having nephews – like Scrappy-Doo – so you can have junior versions of the characters without having to "tie them down" with a wife and family (of course, this begs the question as to where Godzilla's brother or sister is). However, in the Hanna-Barbera series bible, Godzooky is described simply as "an infant relative of Godzilla's." Like Minya,



Godzooky...

Godzooky is only able to blow smoke rings, and also like Minya, his presence in the series is a source of annoyance to many serious G-fans. However, unlike the cowardly Minya, Godzooky shows some courage by frequently trying to help Godzilla in battle against much larger monsters, which usually results in Godzooky having to be rescued or removed from the battle zone by Godzilla, for his own protection. Godzooky is also colored green (albeit a lighter shade of emerald than Godzilla) and more closely resembles an infant Godzilla than Minya ever did. One feature of Godzooky's that neither Godzilla nor Minya share is a pair of tiny wings under his arms that enable



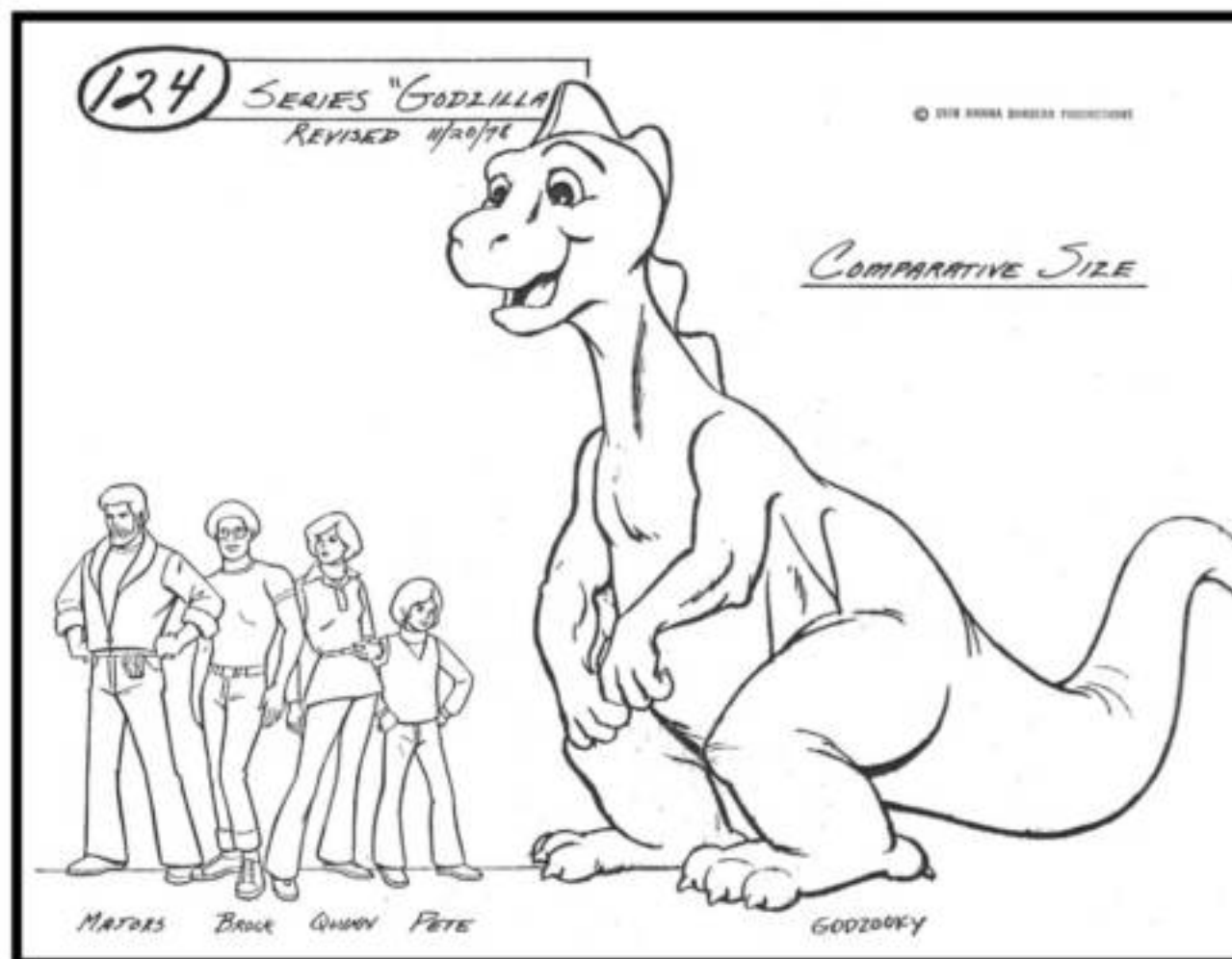
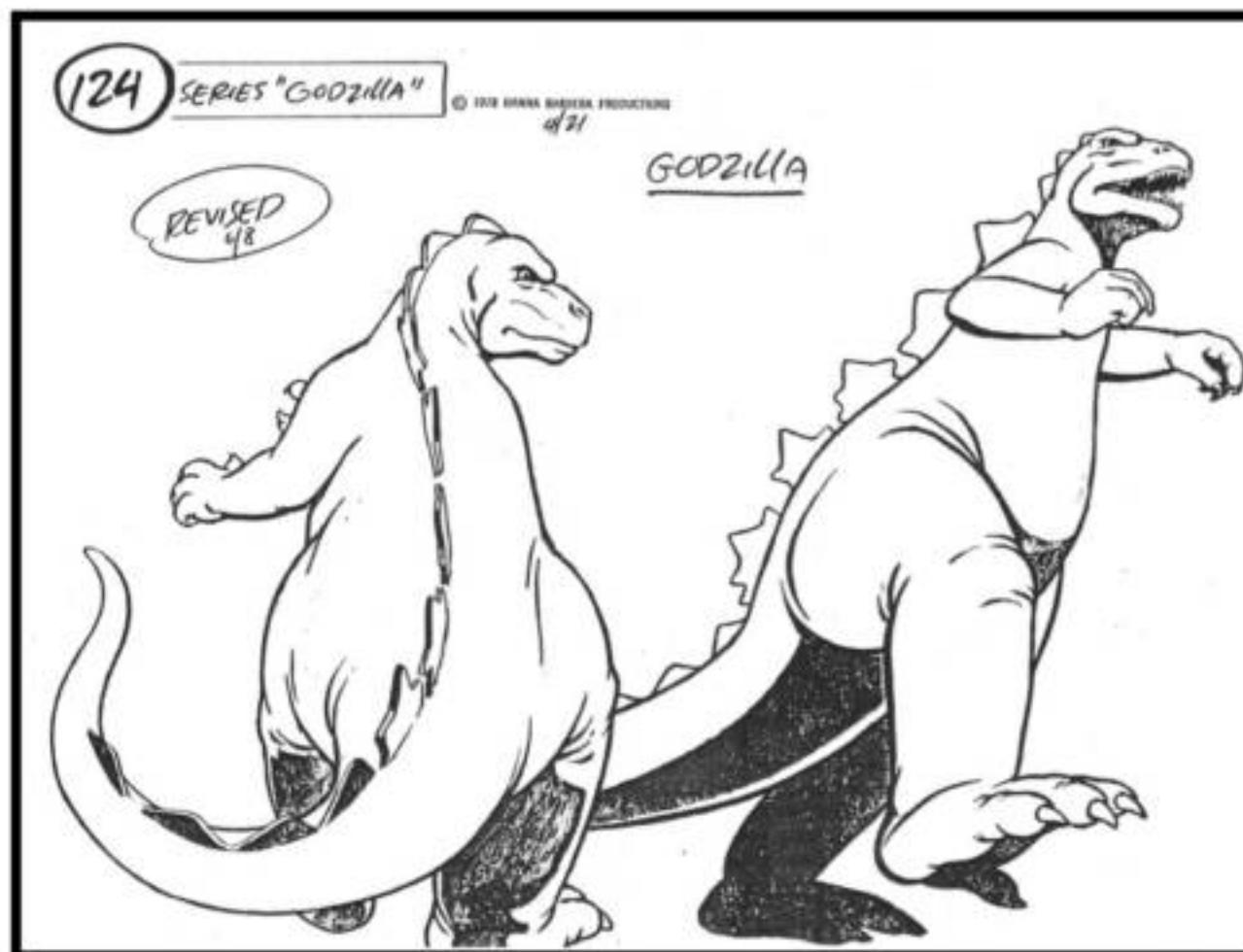
...a cartoon stand-in for Minya.



Capt. Majors' device to summon Godzilla.

him to fly (perhaps his father – and Godzilla's "brother" – is actually Varan). Godzooky is also much smaller than Minya so he can more closely interact with the human crew of the Calico.

According to the Hanna-Barbera series bible, the crew of the Calico first found Godzooky wedged in some coral and freed him (this event is never addressed in the series itself). Seeing their act of kindness, Godzilla serves the crew whenever they are in danger. Godzilla can only be summoned by Godzooky's distress calls or by a special electronic signal device used by Capt. Majors. Conveniently, Godzilla always seems to be close by whenever he's needed (perhaps he was continually following the Calico underwater).



The voice cast included Don Messick (voice of such cartoon stars as Ranger Smith and Boo-Boo from *Yogi Bear*, Scooby-Doo, and Papa Smurf) as Godzooky, Jeff David as Capt. Majors, Brenda Thompson as Quinn Darian, Al Eisenman as Pete, Hilly Hicks as Brock, and (since Toho owned Godzilla's trademark roar) Ted Cassidy as Godzilla. Cassidy is, of course, best known for his role as Lurch on TV's *The Addams Family*. Cassidy's growls were reportedly replaced by Godzilla's traditional roar when the cartoons aired in Japan. Produced by Doug Wildey and developed for TV by Dick Robbins and Duane Poole, the first season of thirteen episodes debuted on September 9th, 1978, as part of *The Godzilla Power Hour* alongside another animated series called *Jana of the Jungle* (sort of a female Tarzan). Later in the season, Hanna-Barbera's classic *Jonny Quest* series was added to the package, which was re-titled *The Godzilla Super 90*. A synopsis



pile of rubble.

4. THE MEGAVOLT MONSTER: While investigating a mysterious power source under the ocean,

of each episode follows...

1. THE FIREBIRD: The crew of the Calico investigates the eruption of an Alaskan volcano, which has been dormant for millions of years. There, they discover a huge, prehistoric Firebird living in the volcano's depths. Freed from the volcano, the Firebird begins to hunt for a safe place to build a nest and lay her eggs. The heat from her body causes the nearby glaciers to melt, resulting in huge floods. Godzilla is called in and defeats the Firebird by sealing her up in an undersea cave. One of the few times Godzilla has ever fought a female monster.



2. THE EARTHEATER: San Francisco is being devoured, block-by-block, by a mysterious, mole-like Eartheater. The crew of the Calico takes to the land to investigate the tunnels made by the Eartheater. Trapped by the monster, the crew calls for Godzilla to rescue them. Attempting to escape from Godzilla, the Eartheater climbs atop the Golden Gate Bridge. Godzilla's laser beams cause the monster to topple into the sea where – like the earth he consumes – he dissolves into mud.



the Calico's crew hears a report of an oil tanker sunk over the Bali Trench that was struck by a lightning bolt from beneath the sea. Quinn, Brock, and Godzooky take the bathysphere to investigate, but their umbilical cord is ripped from the Calico by an electric eel-like Megavolt Monster, causing the craft to fall deep into the ocean. The crew discovers a desert under the sea, protected by a giant air bubble, where a group of Megavolt Monsters feed from a rock outcropping. Godzilla arrives, rupturing the air bubble and flooding the desert. With their power source destroyed, the Megavolt Monsters are rendered harmless.

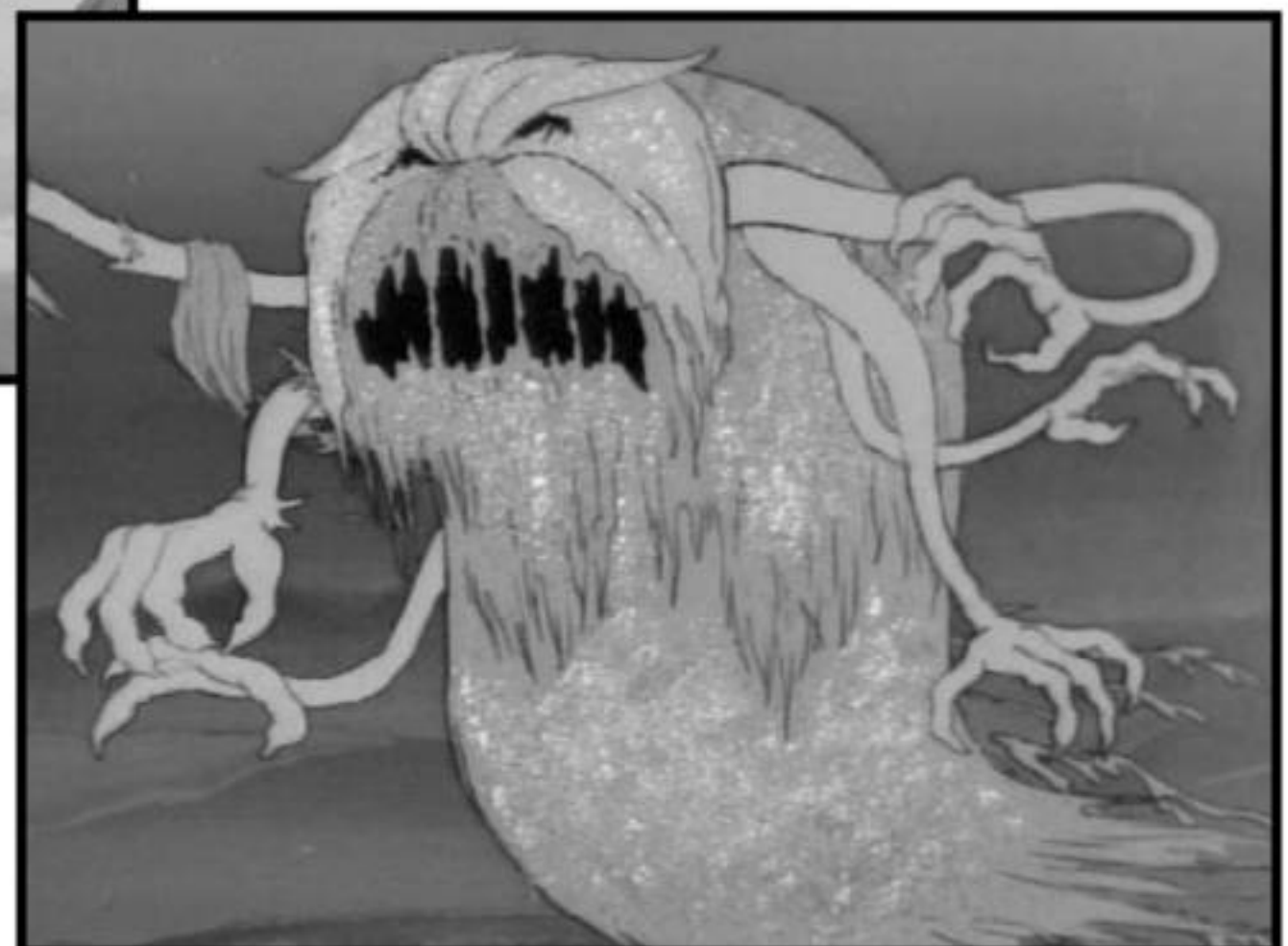
avolt Monsters are rendered harmless.

3. ATTACK OF THE STONE CREATURES:

The Calico docks at a small town on the Nile River in Egypt, where the crew provides sanctuary to a frostbitten archaeologist named Jarvis. Having discovered the ancient pyramid of Ra-Mal, Jarvis was attacked by the Guardians of the Pyramid – giant, stone statues that come to life and emit freezing blasts of wind from their jaws. Following Jarvis' directions, the crew flies their mini-copter to the pyramid, where they are also attacked by the Stone Creatures. Godzilla is summoned to battle the Guardians, who try to charge him from opposite directions. Godzilla sidesteps their attack, causing the Stone Creatures to collide and shatter into a



5. THE SEAWEED MONSTER: The calm sea of the West Indies is disrupted by a strange mutation: a monster composed of living seaweed, which continually grows larger as it merges with more seaweed. The Calico crew calls upon Godzilla when the Seaweed Monster attacks an inhabited

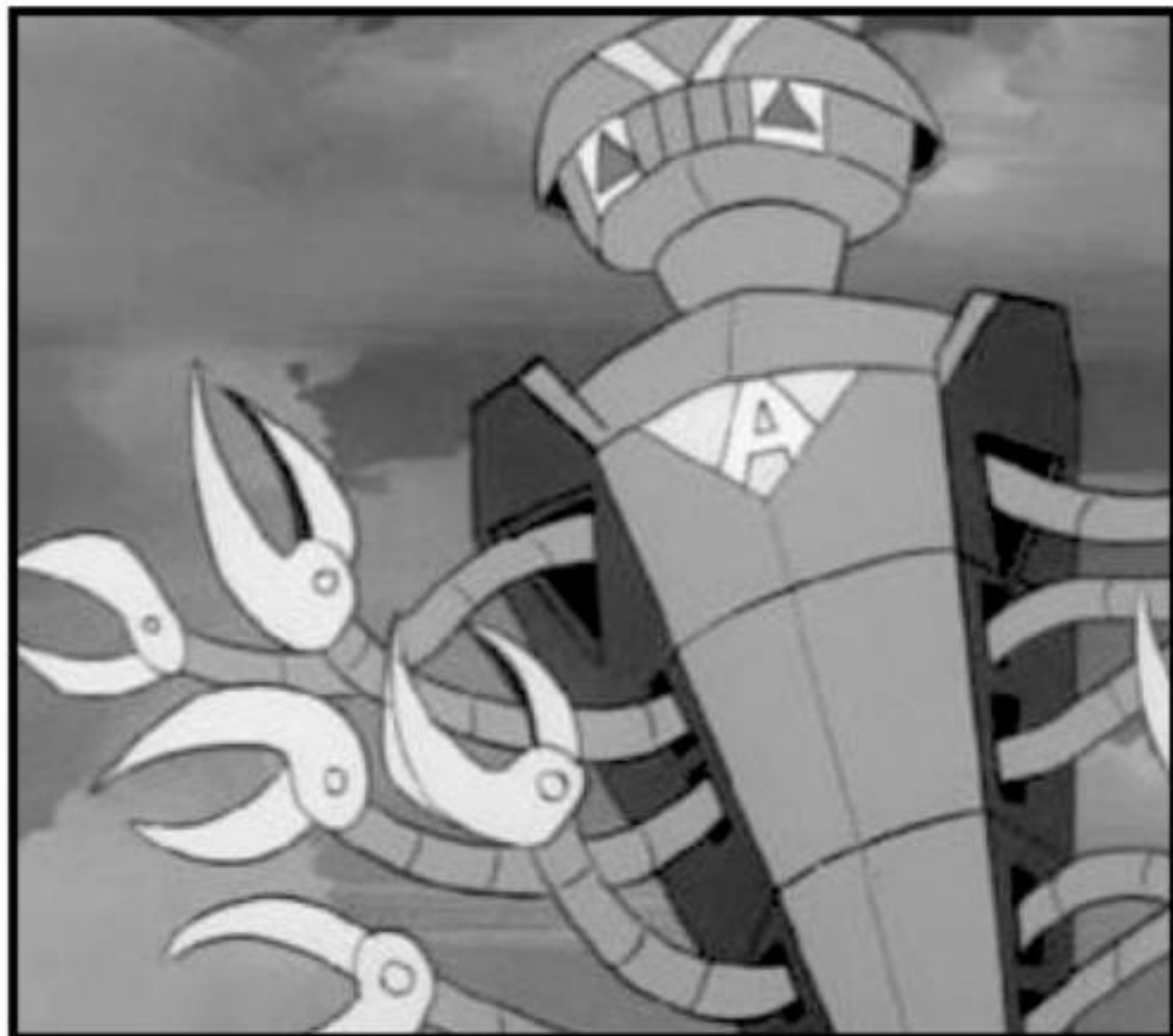


island. When Quinn realizes that heat will dry up the seaweed, Godzilla is instructed to drive the monster into the sunlight, where it is destroyed.

6. THE ENERGY BEAST: A meteor falls to Earth, releasing a centipede-like Energy Beast that terrorizes the Mesa City Dam, absorbing energy from the dam's turbines and growing larger. Godzilla is summoned to drive the monster away and is seemingly injured in the battle. Later, Godzilla is reported to be destroying the electric power plant, leaving the Calico crew to wonder if the battle with the Energy Beast has somehow affected Godzilla and driven him mad. When "Godzilla" fails to respond to the crew or Godzooky, they begin to speculate that there may be more than one Godzilla. Godzooky puts out a call to the real Godzilla, who arrives to confront his double. It is soon revealed that the Energy Beast is a shape-changer and had disguised himself as Godzilla all along! The Energy Beast resumes its original size and retreats back to the meteor, which turns out to be his spaceship. Picking up the craft, Godzilla hurls it back into space.



7. THE COLOSSUS OF ATLANTIS: An undersea earthquake splits the ocean floor, causing the long-lost city of Atlantis to rise to the surface. The Calico is drawn towards Atlantis with a tractor beam. While exploring the city, the crew discovers the inhabitants trapped in a state of suspended animation. A giant robot, which the Atlanteans had built to be their protector, has malfunctioned and taken over the city in their absence. Godzilla is summoned to battle the robot, sending it crashing into the sea. The Atlanteans awaken and release the crew of the Calico, transforming Atlantis into a spacecraft and returning to their original home in outer space.



8. THE HORROR OF FORGOTTEN ISLAND: A force field constructed around an island by space visitors to protect the Earth from a giant Cyclops is accidentally de-activated during a magnetic storm. The Calico moors off the coast of the island to repair some damages. When the force field suddenly re-activates, the crew is trapped on the island with the Cyclops, and Godzilla is unable to break through the force field to rescue them. Quinn discovers a monolithic stone structure that controls the field, allowing her to shut it off and let Godzilla enter to battle the Cyclops. Quinn



then devises a timer, which re-activates the force field after the crew and Godzilla leave the island, imprisoning the Cyclops once again.

9. ISLAND OF LOST SHIPS:

The crew of the Calico becomes trapped on an ancient Greek island that appears on Earth only once every 1,000 years. The siren Morpheia and her two sisters try to put the crew under their spell, so they will vanish along with the island at sunset. Godzilla arrives to rescue his friends, and the evil sirens combine their power with that of the Chimera (a mythical beast that is part lion, part goat, and part serpent) to battle him.



Godzilla sends the Chimera falling from a cliff into the sea and departs with the Calico crew just before the island disappears for another 1,000 years.

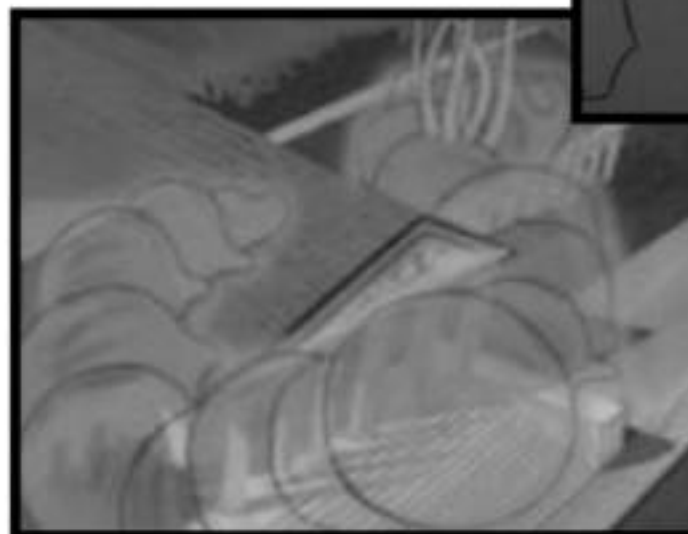
10. THE MAGNETIC TERROR: A Magnetic Monster, resembling a giant sea turtle, rises from the depths of the Antarctic Ocean. Unfortunately, this turtle doesn't turn out to be a friend to children and instead devours energy from the oil pump at a drilling outpost. Summoned by the crew of the Calico, Godzilla is nearly destroyed, as the monster grows larger from feeding on magnetic energy and soon dwarfs Godzilla in size. Like a giant magnet, the monster is able to emit waves of magnetic energy, which pulls the mini-sub containing Capt. Majors and Brock into its jaws. Godzilla saves the



the day by luring the Magnetic Monster directly over the South Pole, where it absorbs too much magnetic

energy and explodes, releasing the mini-sub with Capt. Majors and Brock still intact.

11. THE BREEDER BEAST: A protoplasm-like Breeder Beast emerges from the waters of Chesapeake Bay, having been mutated from the pollution of a nearby oil spill (somewhat like Hedorah the Smog Monster). Needing to consume gold, silver, and platinum in order to survive, the Beast heads for the U.S. Mint. Quinn realizes that, due to the gases and metals it has absorbed, the Breeder Beast is a potential nuclear bomb, and neither the National Guard nor Godzilla can attack it for fear of triggering an explosion. Finally, Godzilla uses his laser beams on the Beast's nucleus, causing it to crystallize and reduce in size until it is rendered harmless.



12. THE SUB-ZERO TERROR: The Calico crew hikes into the Himalayan Mountains with their old friend, Dr. Rourke, and a group of scientists in search of a new source of geothermal energy. In an extinct volcano, they discover the village of the Watchuka – a tribe of abominable snowmen – that is powered by a huge steam engine. They also discover an army of giant snowmen frozen in ice, which is being prepared for an attack on mankind. Godzilla is summoned, but the Watchuka call upon their own extra-large snow monster: the Great Watchuka! As the monsters do battle, the volcano begins to erupt. Godzilla takes his friends to safety and plugs the volcano with a giant rock, trapping the Watchukas – small, large, and extra-large – inside.



13. THE TIME DRAGONS: When a satellite falling from space is about to crash into the Calico, Godzilla is summoned and catches it. However, the energy released from the satellite creates a time warp that sends Godzilla and the Calico back to the prehistoric past (Godzilla also travelled back in time in Marvel's comic book series). There, the crew befriends a tribe of cavemen and teaches them how to defend themselves from dinosaurs by helping them to build a catapult (of course, cavemen shouldn't be co-existing with dinosaurs, but hey – it's only a cartoon, right?). When a Tyrannosaurus-like dinosaur attacks the crew, Godzilla comes to the rescue

again. While Godzilla battles the dinosaur, an earthquake releases a pocket of liquid uranium. The energy from the uranium re-opens the time warp, sending Godzilla, the dinosaur, and the Calico back in time to a moment before they originally left (why they don't run into duplicates of themselves in the past is another mystery). Once again, the satellite is about to crash into the Calico. This time, the crew has Godzooky instruct Godzilla not to catch the satellite but to push it away. Godzilla does so, pushing the satellite towards the dinosaur, who catches it and is returned to his own time.



Godzilla proved successful enough to return for a second season of thirteen more episodes. This time, Hanna-Barbera allowed Godzilla to stand on his own without being paired with any other cartoons. However, at one point, it was supposed to be packaged with episodes of *The New Shmoo* and *The Thing* (Ben Grimm from the *Fantastic Four*, not *Mothra*). Instead, the *Flintstones* were put in that position, resulting in *Fred & Barney Meet the Thing*, and later, *Fred & Barney Meet the Shmoo*.

14. THE GOLDEN GUARDIANS: When an archaeological expedition is terrorized by a living oriental statue made of gold, the crew of the Calico arrives at the ancient city of Kali-Noor to investigate. They discover an army of Golden Guardian statues being controlled by a superstitious high priest, who seeks to scare away intruders. When Godzilla is summoned to battle one of the Guardians, rays from its eyes turn Godzilla into an immobile, golden statue. When the dreamstone that the high priest uses to control the statues is shattered, the Guardians begin to run amok. Realizing



that the rays the Guardian used to turn Godzilla into gold are the opposite of Godzilla's own laser beams, Brock convinces his friends to beam the Calico's communication laser at Godzilla, which shatters the gold encasing him. Godzilla then uses his fiery breath to melt the Guardians into a pool of liquid gold.

15. CALICO CLONES: While on a top-secret mission to an oil field, the Calico is captured by the mad scientist Votrang, who creates clones of the crew and Godzooky. Hoping to learn the location of the oil field, Votrang plans to substitute his clones for the crew. Escaping from their cell, the crew secretly switches places with Votrang's clones and head for the oil field aboard the Calico. Realizing that he has been tricked, Votrang sends his giant squid after them, but Godzilla arrives and ties its arms into knots. Votrang tries to escape but is

captured by the U.S. Navy.

16. MICROGODZILLA:

This one could have been called “The Incredible Shrinking Godzilla!” A strange, pink cloud envelops the Calico, causing a tiny fly and Godzilla to assume opposite proportions. As the enlarging/shrinking process continues, Quinn desperately searches for an antidote before the gigantic fly destroys the Calico and Godzilla shrinks out of existence. The rapidly shrinking Godzilla battles a mouse (just as he did when he was shrunk in Marvel’s comic book series) and eventually becomes so small that he is menaced by microscopic organisms. Finally, Quinn applies an electrical charge to her antidote serum, creating a powerful gas that returns Godzilla to his original height. Godzilla battles the now-giant fly, enabling the crew to use the gas on it as well, returning the fly to its normal size.



17. GHOST SHIP: The Calico crew discovers a World War One submarine trapped in an iceberg and call upon Godzilla to melt the ice with his fiery breath. After a 60-year hibernation, the crew of the submarine awakens from suspended animation. Thinking that the war is still on, the submarine crew accidentally triggers a torpedo, which rushes towards the Calico. Godzilla grabs the missile, taking it down to the ocean depths, but it explodes before he can safely bury it. The explosion stuns Godzilla and also arouses a giant octopus, which attacks the submarine. Godzooky goes underwater to revive Godzilla, who battles the octopus and pushes it back into its under-sea cave, sealing it closed with a large rock.



18. THE BEAST OF STORM ISLAND: The Calico is beached on Storm Island, where Capt. Majors, Quinn, and Brock are turned into zombies by the hypnotic stare of the cobra-like monster, Axor. Empowered by strange vapors that originate from within his mountain lair, Axor has enslaved the entire populace of the island. Pete and Godzooky manage to escape Axor’s power and summon Godzilla. During the battle, Godzilla’s fiery breath fuses the side of a mountain into a mirror-like glass. When Axor tries to use his hypnotic rays, Godzilla steps aside, and the rays reflect off of the mirror and back onto Axor. Axor is destroyed, releasing the Calico crew and his



other slaves from their trances.

19. VALLEY OF THE GIANTS: Searching for the Mitibu River’s headwaters, the crew of the Calico discovers a hidden valley inhabited by overgrown insects – including giant bees and ants. An earthquake causes a rockslide that blocks the entrance to the valley, trapping the crew. Quinn deduces that sunlight, when filtered through the strange clouds that surround the valley, causes a chemical reaction that increases the insects’ size. Godzilla is summoned and does battle with a giant spider, which bites Godzilla and traps him in a web cocoon (Kumonga never put up that much of a fight). When the spider traps Godzooky in its web, Godzilla revives and cuts himself free of the cocoon with his laser beams. The spider is again exposed to the sunlight, which causes it to increase further in size, becoming even larger than Godzilla. Godzilla tricks the spider into biting itself, poisoning it with its own venom. Godzilla smashes through the debris that blocked the entrance to the valley, returning his friends to the Calico, and then seals up the entrance again to keep the giant insects trapped inside.

20. THE CYBORG WHALE: While test-driving a robotic whale (not actually a cyborg), which has been developed for undersea plankton mining, Pete and Brock become trapped inside during a lightning storm. With its computers destroyed by the lightning, the whale goes out of control and heads on a collision course with Honolulu. Godzilla is unable to attack the whale for fear of harming Pete and Brock inside. However, the boys manage to escape and are flown to safety by Godzooky, enabling Godzilla to battle the robot. With his massive hands, Godzilla bends the whale’s rear rudder, causing it to swim in circles until it runs out of fuel and can be safely repaired.

21. THE CITY IN THE CLOUDS: A fierce cyclone sucks the Calico and Godzilla up to a futuristic city in the sky, which is populated by a race of cloud dwellers. The city is menaced by a winged Power Dragon, but



Godzilla chases it back into the clouds. Realizing that Godzilla can keep the city safe from the Dragon, the leader of the cloud dwellers tries to trick the crew into exchanging Godzilla for their safe return to earth, but they refuse. The Power Dragon attacks again and Godzilla lures it into an opening in the clouds. The Dragon is sent plummeting into the vortex of the cyclone, eliminating its threat to the cloud city. The crew then diverts the city's generators to transport themselves back to earth and the cloud dwellers back to their sky kingdom.

22. THE MACRO-BEASTS: A volcanic eruption releases a high-potency super food source into the ocean, speeding up the growth process of nearby sea life. Godzilla is summoned to battle a giant manta ray, while Capt. Majors and Brock round up the remaining giant sea creatures with their mini-sub, herding them into a coral enclosure. Quinn deduces that ice water will reverse the growth process, and Godzilla is sent to the Antarctic to retrieve an iceberg. Godzilla drops the ice into the coral enclosure, where it cools the water and returns the sea creatures to their normal size.

23. MOONLODE: A lunar eclipse triggers a moonquake that plummets an energized monster into the ocean. Using his gravitational force, the Moon Monster creates a giant whirlpool that threatens the Calico. Godzilla is summoned to battle the monster and heaves it up towards the moon, where it is recaptured by the lunar gravity. First, Godzilla is hurling spaceships into outer space, and now entire monsters? Probably the worst episode in the series.



24. PACIFIC PERIL: Massive earthquakes are causing undersea volcanoes to appear in the Pacific Ocean, sending the Calico to investigate the disturbance. Journeying inside one of the volcanoes, the crew discovers a herd of giant fire-breathing lizards, which feed on molten lava. They also discover the cause of the earthquakes – a missing Jupiter Probe rocket, which has become wedged between two coastal plates. Boarding the rocket, the crew manages to get it working and attempts to use it to return to the surface. Godzilla enters the volcano to rescue Godzooky from the lava monsters. Godzilla then uses his mighty strength to thrust the rocket



back to the surface and destroys the volcano.

25. ISLAND OF DOOM: The evil COBRA Council threatens the cities of the world with ICBMs unless the United Nations meets their demands. The crew of the Calico locates COBRA's secret island base and are taken captive. Since G.I. Joe apparently wasn't available, Godzilla is called upon to do battle with COBRA's military forces. In a scene reminiscent of many Toho films, Godzilla withstands tanks, planes, and other weapons to rescue his friends and destroy COBRA's nuclear reactor. With their weapons depleted, the COBRA Council's threat is ended, and the terrorists are taken prisoner by the United Nations Task Force. Yo, Joe-zilla!

26. THE DEADLY ASTEROID: While temperatures begin to drop across the world, the Calico heads for the North Pole to investigate a UFO sighting. There, the crew encounters giant icebergs and realizes that the water levels are dropping as the oceans begin to freeze. The crew finds a spaceship hidden in one of the icebergs, which is the secret base of Ice People from the asteroid Frios. Using their ship's magnetic generators, the Ice People have been directing Frios to fall to Earth, throwing the world into a present-day Ice Age so that they can take over. When Godzooky cries for Godzilla, the ice people freeze him solid. Using the exhaust from their mini-sub, Pete and Brock manage to defrost Godzilla, and the crew has Godzooky instruct Godzilla to turn the Ice People's spaceship upside-down. This reverses the ship's magnetic generators, repelling Frios away from Earth and sending the Ice People retreating back into outer space.

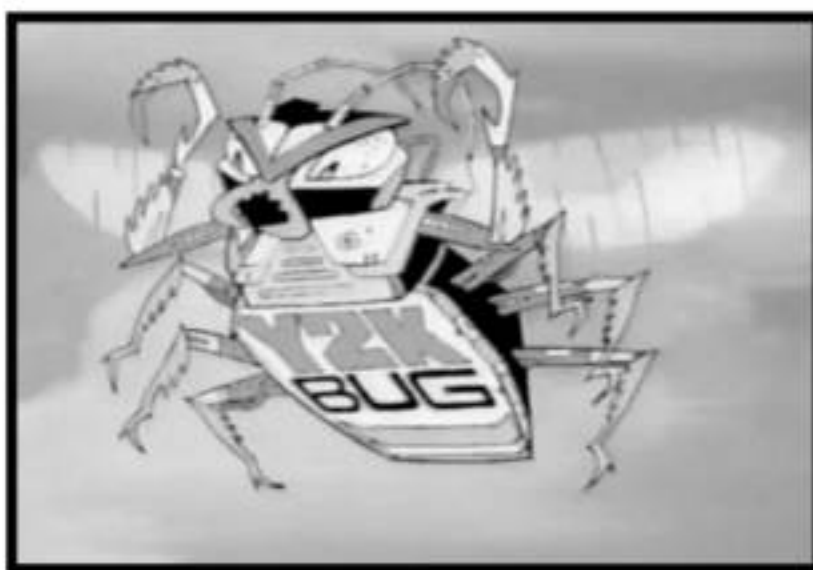
Although no further episodes were produced, *Godzilla* managed to hang on for awhile longer in re-runs – paired first with the “Super (Harlem) Globetrotters” as *The Godzilla/Globetrotters Hour*, then with Hanna-Barbera's canine superheroes in *The Godzilla/Dynomutt Hour* and *The Godzilla/Hong Kong Phooey Hour* – before finally ending its run on NBC, to

be replaced the following season by *The Smurfs*. During the 1990's, episodes would air as part of TNT's “Godzilla Bash” movie marathons, as well as on



Cartoon Network and Boomerang, but the series hasn't been shown on TV in a long time. Around the turn of the millennium, Cartoon Network did create a humorous short called



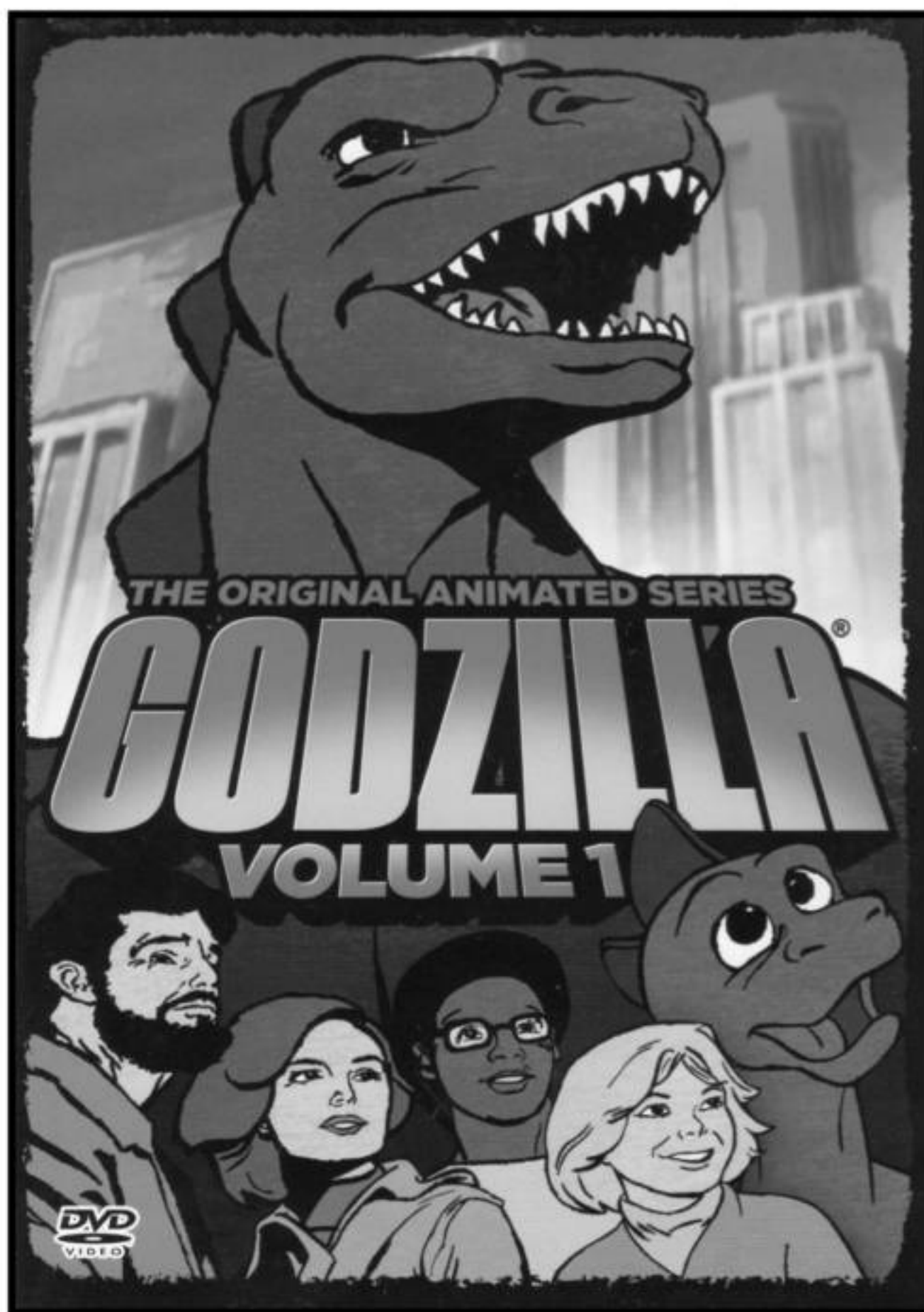


also an animated series on FOX based on the TriStar film that ran for 40 episodes from 1998-2000, but the less said about it, the better.

And so, Godzilla's first foray into the world of animation came to an end, as did his adventures in film and comics – at least for a while. But, as we all know, you can't keep the King of the Monsters down for long. Godzilla

"Godzilla vs. the Y2K Bug", in which the Calico crew is attacked by a giant bug and tries to summon Godzilla, but their signal device doesn't work because Capt. Majors forgot to upgrade the embedded microchip to make it Y2K-compatible.

The premiere episode of "The Firebird" was released on VHS but is long since out-of-print. Classic Media released the first 13 episodes on DVD in three separate volumes. The first season is also available through streaming on Netflix and Hulu. The second 13 episodes remain unavailable, but perhaps the upcoming Warner Bros./Legendary Films movie will generate some new interest in releasing it on DVD. There was



would return to both film and comics numerous times. Since Sony created its own animated series based on the TriStar film, perhaps Warner/Legendary will do the same? If so, we can only hope that this version is more faithful to the Godzilla we have all come to know and love. Stay 'toon!



DWELLER, AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR JEFF STRAND

By Dustin LaValley

Jeff Strand has been well known in the small press for works such as his Andrew Mayhem series, which began with *Graverobbers Wanted (No Experience Necessary)* and for other novels such as *Disposal*, the big-bug novel *Mandibles* and *The Sinister Mr. Corpse*. Before the doors shut at Leisure Books, *Pressure*, a Stoker Award finalist was released to rave reviews and it's thrilling, darkly humorous human-derived horror brought in attention from those outside of the small press. This surprise attack upon readers who were discovering this unique author for the first time were then treated to the mass paperback release of the focal point of this piece: *Dweller*. A novel that brings to us those fantastical chills of childhood, those long forgotten adventures through our imaginations that place folklore alongside and even face to face with reality. What initially drew me to *Dweller* was Strand's style of writing. A witty author, who successfully injects his humor with horror and his horror with humor and with the stamp of his name, brings to the genre(s) a much needed voice of refreshing individualism and creativity.

The story follows a boy named Toby, a lonely child who is seen as a loner. His imagination is by far a quality that treats him well in his friendless existence and sadly, at times a defense mechanism, a sign of an unstable mind. The boy meets a creature, a primal, animalistic monster who as we read on learn that although he is frightening, is also much like us in ways other than being scary. The two bond and together share many years of quality interspecies friendship that sticks through the good and the bad. Strand's ability to humanize the "monster" seems almost effortless and his chronicle of the life of Toby, with characterization that is so well done makes us believe that the author is in fact reporting from the mind of Toby and not delivering a work of fiction but a work of non-fiction written through stream-of-consciousness. In the end, I, like most readers, felt as connected to the two main characters as we do our flesh and blood friends and relatives...even though one character is not human. This is due to Strand's immense and sharp skill with words.

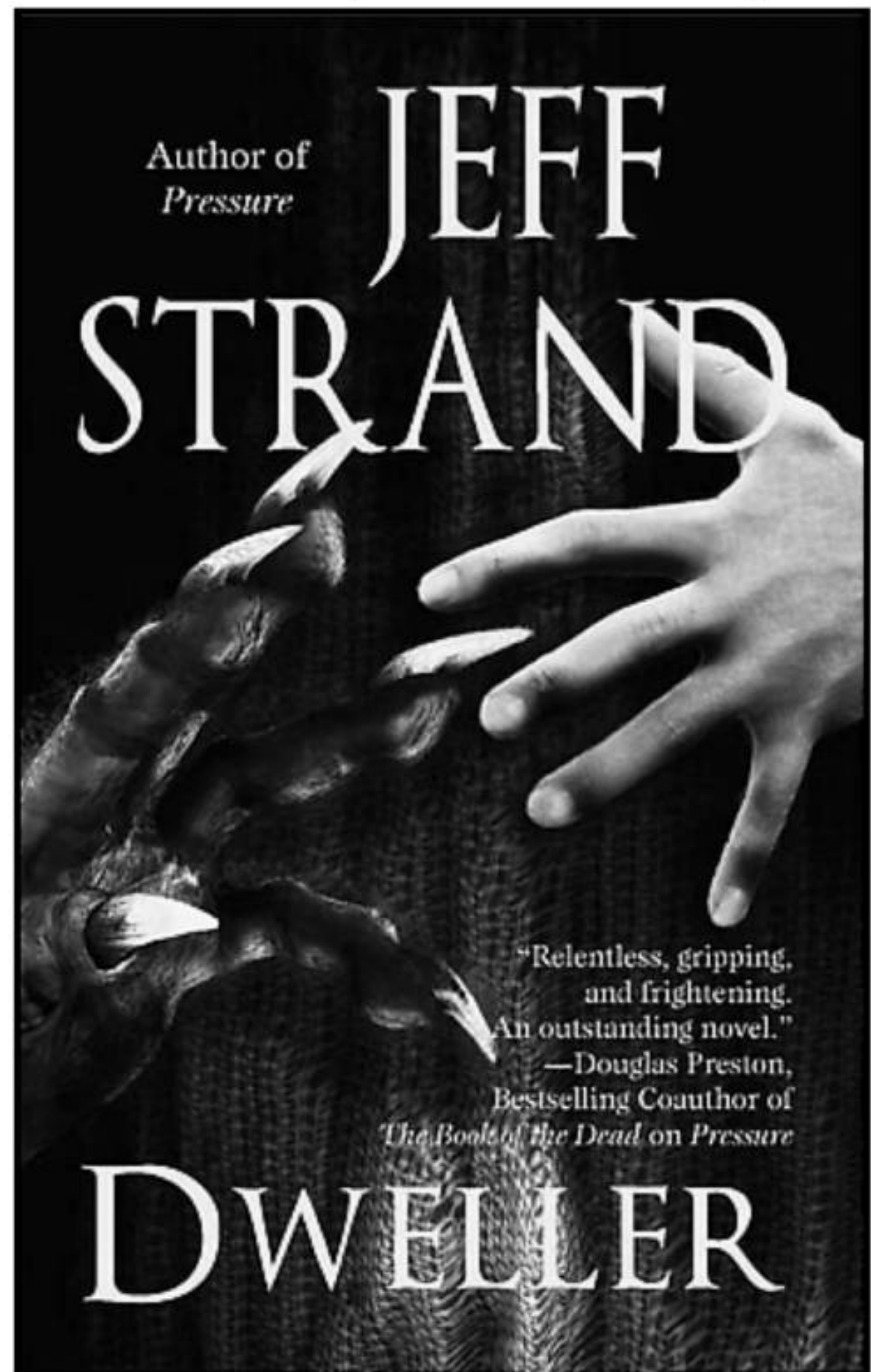
After reading *Dweller*, I felt an almost overwhelming urge to contact the man responsible for the most fun I've had with a book in a good while and bother him as much as possible, to an annoying degree that would have driven off most. But, thankfully, this "Gleefully macabre" author gave allowance to my pestering and permitted me the following interview.

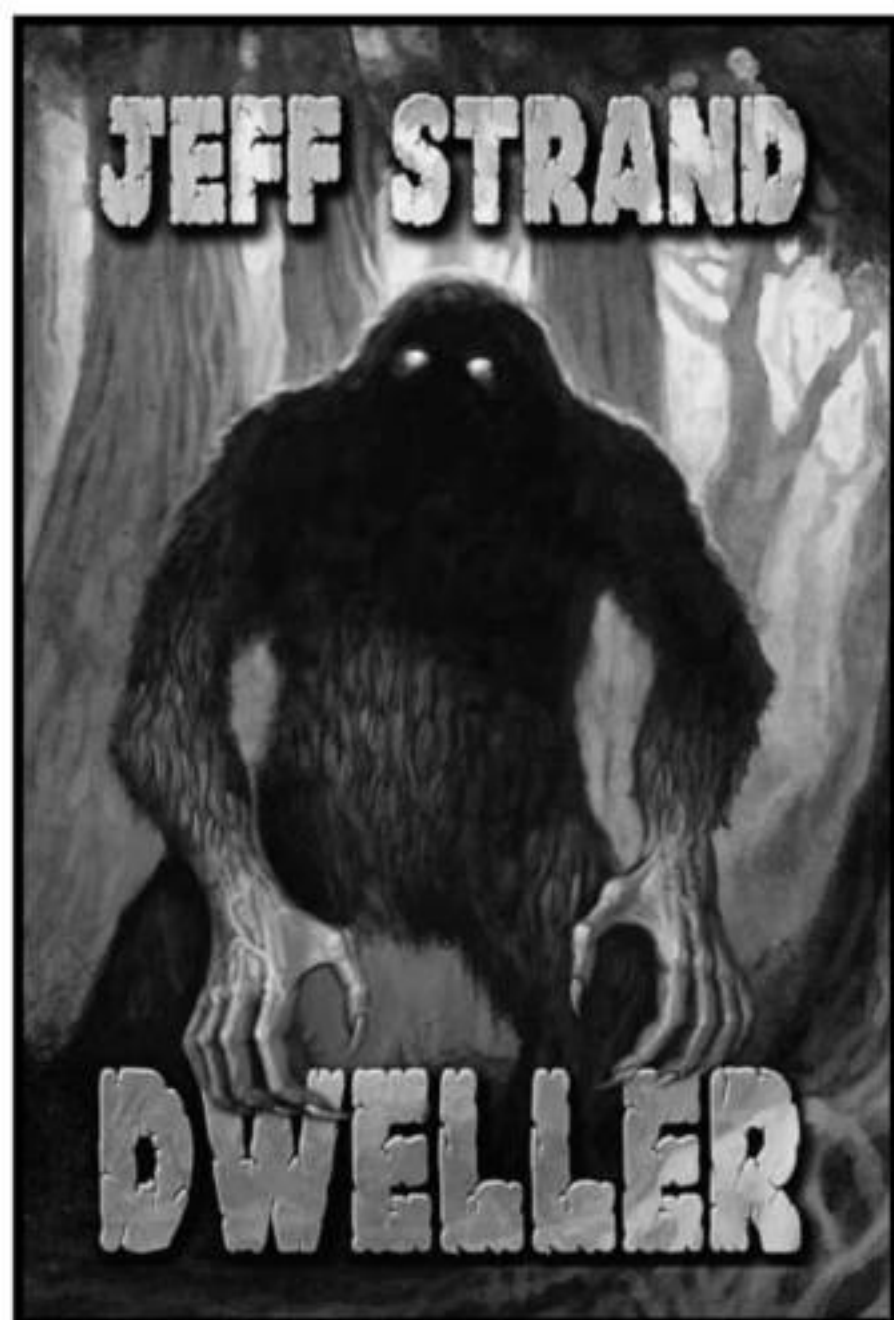
Before we continue into the interview portion, the author and I must warn that there are crucial elements of the story included. If you have yet to read *Dweller*, perhaps you may want to stop right here and

save this piece for after reading said novel or, perhaps read on and let the curiosity of this interviewer and enthusiasm of the interviewee guide you to your first glimpse of the wonderful, thrilling and sentimental ride that is one of the very best books in the horror genre(s).

Dustin LaValley: How did the concept of *Dweller* come about?

Jeff Strand: Y'know, I wish I'd made up a more exciting answer when the book was first published. But really it came down Don D'Auria at Leisure Books saying "Okay, what's next after *Pressure*?" and I started writing down a bunch of very quick ideas, including "Bullied kid becomes friends with a monster, and the book follows them for their entire lives, from childhood to old age." So there's no cool story behind the book – it was just the





product of a brainstorming session!

DL: This is certainly a fast paced read, with the end of each chapter demanding the next page be turned until there aren't any pages left. Did the writing process carry this flow?

JS: Unlike most of my books, *Dweller* had a detailed outline before I

started writing, so there's very few moments of "Oh, no! I don't know what's going to happen next!" That sped up the writing process. On the other hand, I'm fastest and most comfortable when I'm writing dialogue, and Owen, the Monster in the Woods, isn't exactly a chatty creature, so that slowed things down and it sort of balanced out. It took a few months to write, which is my usual pace.

DL: The book follows the friendship of man and monster for a period of fifty years. This form of chronicle narrative fits the story very well. Were there any other ways of portraying this that were decided against?

JS: Not by me. It wasn't an easy sell; my editor would have been more comfortable with the book covering five years instead of fifty. But for me the whole point of telling this story was the epic timeframe, and if I couldn't write it so that it covered their entire lives, I would have just moved on to a completely different idea.

DL: How did you come up with the description, physical and personality-wise of the monster, Owen?

JS: In the very early stages I thought Owen might be a reptilian creature living in a well. But since the book was taking place over such a long period of time, I thought it would be too limiting – he needed the whole forest to play around in. I also thought that suspension of disbelief would be easier if it were closer to Bigfoot than a scaly reptile.

Owen's personality was just a balancing act of making it credible that Toby could think of him as an actual friend, without making him *too* human. There's a gradual progression from being a pure animal to being more human, though in the outline I took that progression a bit further than what's in the actual novel. When Owen kills, it's purely out of fear or animal instinct. If you can overlook the shredded bodies, he's

really a kind, sweet soul.

DL: Toby is one of the most fleshed out characters I've read in a good while. It's as though he's been in our life since childhood, almost like a member of the family. How did you come to create the novel's protagonist? Is there some Toby inside you?

JS: The major question when creating Toby was "What kind of person would form a lifetime friendship with a hairy, fanged, clawed monster in the woods?" It was easy in the early stages of the book, because Toby is wide-eyed and imaginative, and the boy/monster relationship is mostly about having a really cool secret. I think a lot of readers of the book would have loved having an Owen in their youth.

As the book progresses, his other relationships become more complex, so the key to the character was that he's loyal to a fault. A very big fault. He can't "abandon" his friend, even if it might be the best thing for both of them.

I don't think I'm much like Toby at all. All of my strong childhood friendships now involve, at best, the occasional Facebook post, so I certainly wouldn't continue to hang out with a creature after it killed my girlfriend!

DL: Would you consider Toby to be a loner due to social norms and circumstances or perhaps one which self-loathing controls? Is it possible he's an outsider because of an inborn stigma?

JS: At the beginning, his loner status is pretty straightforward: he's small, socially awkward, and can't fight back against the bullies. Had things worked out just a bit differently, I think he would have been a relatively normal kid who hated school but then went on to have a nice career and a great life. Maybe the bullies would even work for him and have to call him "sir."

As he gets older, is he *trying* to stay an outsider? I don't think so. Certainly he's wracked with guilt over murdering the bullies, but nothing would have made him happier than if the Owen/Melissa meeting had gone well, or if his own son could have grown up with a monster friend. There wasn't any self-sabotage involved; it's simply that Toby needed this friendship in his life, and it prevented other elements of his life from working out.

DL: The relationship with Owen becomes a form of comfort and release, a symbol of strength and self-worth for our lost teenage Toby. Do you believe the bullies, Larry and Nick, would have lived had Toby not had thoughts of his monster friend in the back of his mind?

JS: I think they'd still be dead. That scene was meant to throw a huge curveball at the reader. You think you know how it's going to turn out: when the bullies follow Toby out into the woods, he's going to purposely lead them to Owen and their doom. Or maybe the bullies will attack Toby and get killed when Owen suddenly

appears to save his friend. What you (hopefully) don't see coming is that Toby stabs both of the bullies to death, and Owen isn't even in the scene.

Did Toby have more courage, knowing that he had a ferocious monster on his side? Maybe. But the death of Nick came from a moment of blind rage, not bravery, so that horrible event would probably have turned out just the same.

DL: Were there feelings that had to be fought to not write Owen into the classroom or into a public situation, where Toby could use him as a weapon like he fantasizes or in a "Two bits a gander" situation?

JS: No, the final rampage was always going to be the only time Owen was out in public. Taking him out of the woods would have completely changed the direction of the story in an interesting way, but it's not anything I ever considered doing.

DL: Toby goes against his own logic and reason in favor of showing off his monster buddy (Best Friend Forever) to a select few close to him. This also goes against his wild imaginative worst-case scenarios. How would you explain his decisions in these scenes?

JS: When something is such a big part of your life, it's a challenge to hide it from everybody else you care about! He knows there's danger, but Toby doesn't consider Owen a shameful secret, so it's killing him not to be able to share Owen with the people he loves.

Toby does think these things out. It takes him a long time to finally make the decision to share Owen with his son, and when he does, he takes plenty of

precautions. Owen doesn't harm the kid. The accident with the rotten wood could have happened if they were simply making a clubhouse. And earlier in the book, had his girlfriend Melissa not accidentally scraped Owen with her fingernails, their meeting might have worked out just fine. Toby's decisions have tragic consequences, but he's not reckless about them.

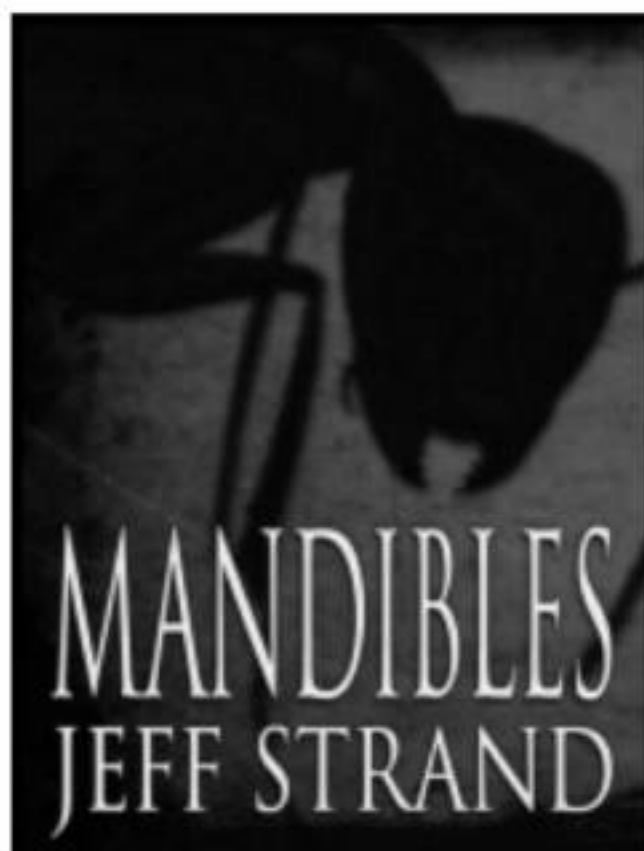
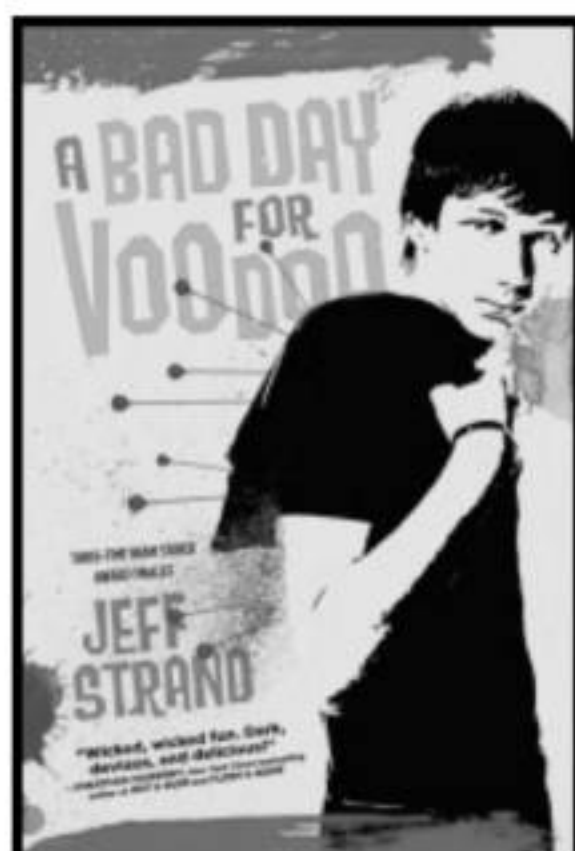
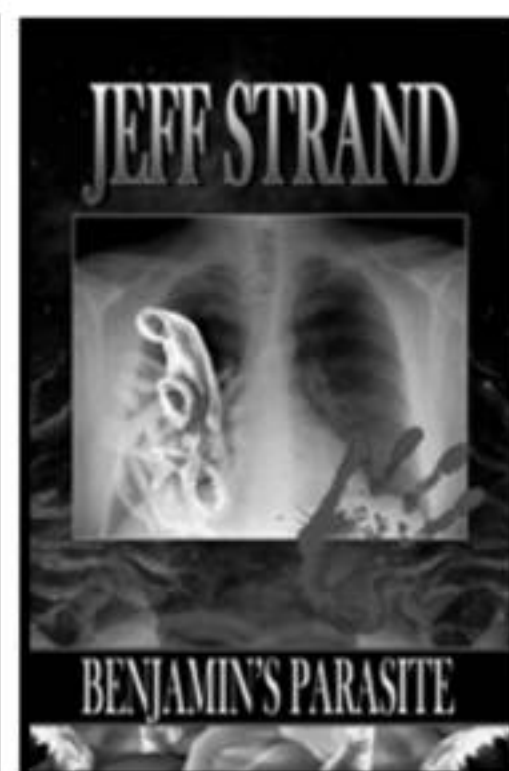
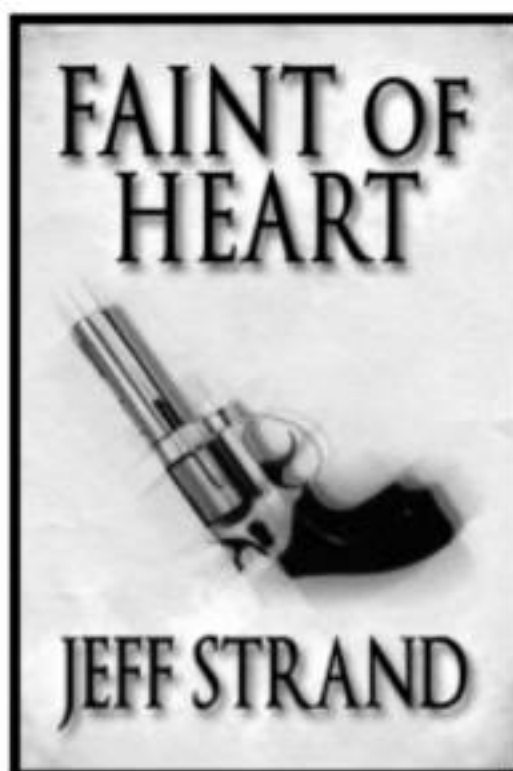
DL: The humor is just as pronounced as the horror within *Dweller*. With as many bloody scenes (the death of Melissa) as there were human-derived horror (Toby's anguish over Melissa's death), it brought on a strange sense of twisted humor. Was there ever a question of which aspect should be more showcased?

JS: Ultimately, *Dweller* is a horror novel. So the humor is there to serve the needs of a very dark, bleak story. Without the humor, I think the book would be almost depressing. Even though it's a tragedy and you're supposed to cry at the end, it's still supposed to be an entertaining read, so it needed a lot of light moments to balance out the dark ones.

DL: Toby's imagination as an adult is almost as active as when he was a child. Is this a mechanism to deal with the redundancy and loneliness that has plagued him? Or is it more likely a natural continuation of a unique individual's life?

JS: For Toby, there's a thin line between imagination and insanity, and I think he crosses back and forth between the two.

DL: The internal war of Owen vs. Family has a strong



Other novels by
Jeff Strand.

presence. When Owen left for two years, Toby kept vigil at his cave. When his wife and children left, he stood in the distance with only a phone call here and there. Has Toby by this point in his adult life become accustomed to a lack of faith in humanity with more assurance in that of a dangerous yet cuddly monster?

JS: Toby can't have both. And I wanted to make it very clear that he *does* have the opportunity to live a normal life. He's got a girlfriend. He's got a job. Later, he has a family. If he could just leave Owen out there in the woods, he'd probably be okay.

I don't think it's a lack of faith in humanity. Even near the end of the novel, Toby still thinks that he can bring his son, now an adult, into the world he shares with Owen. In the very last scene, where Toby and Owen are dying, Toby thinks about how he and Owen could have had a happy life, adored by millions. He's bitter about the way his life played out, but he never gets accustomed to the disappointment over what could have been.

DL: Owen is seen by Toby, in the most part, as a big loveable pet. Even with his outbursts, human characteristics are shown and even displayed more so than his primal nature. Was Toby's intervention positive for him or do you think it played the opposite role of not letting an animal live as an animal?

JS: It all ends badly, of course, but Owen got a lot out of the friendship. Was his life better than if they'd never met? Well...as we see in the book, Owen is not the only one of his kind. He and Toby take that long journey through the forest to be with Owen's fellow creatures.

But because it's in their nature to see humans as food, Owen is forced to turn on them when one of them attacks Toby. If Owen had gone on that particular journey alone, he probably would have lived a much happier life.

DL: Do you believe that with the right integration, Owen the monster could have become Owen the interspecies celebrity?

JS: Owen isn't cute. It's unlikely that the public would have embraced this misshapen creature the way they would an ape with sign-language skills or dolphins. He probably would have ended up as a caged spectacle.

DL: In your opinion, could it have been a plan of fate that brought the pair together in the beginning and, also to their dual demises?

JS: I think that in *Toby's* opinion it could have been a plan of fate. But, really, it was Toby's decisions – even when he took precautions and carefully considered the consequences – that led to the tragic end. Bad luck? Yes. Fate? Probably not.

I'd like to give Jeff Strand a great big thank you for his time and this in-depth look at *Dweller*. Not enough praise can be given to this novel and I can't push you hard enough to go online or to the local bookstore and purchase a copy. To find Jeff online, stop by his website at www.JeffStrand.com and give it a thorough reading, you may discover a new favorite story.

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WATCHMEN



A LOOK AT THE CLASSIC THROUGH THE EYES
OF A TWENTY-SOMETHING YEAR OLD

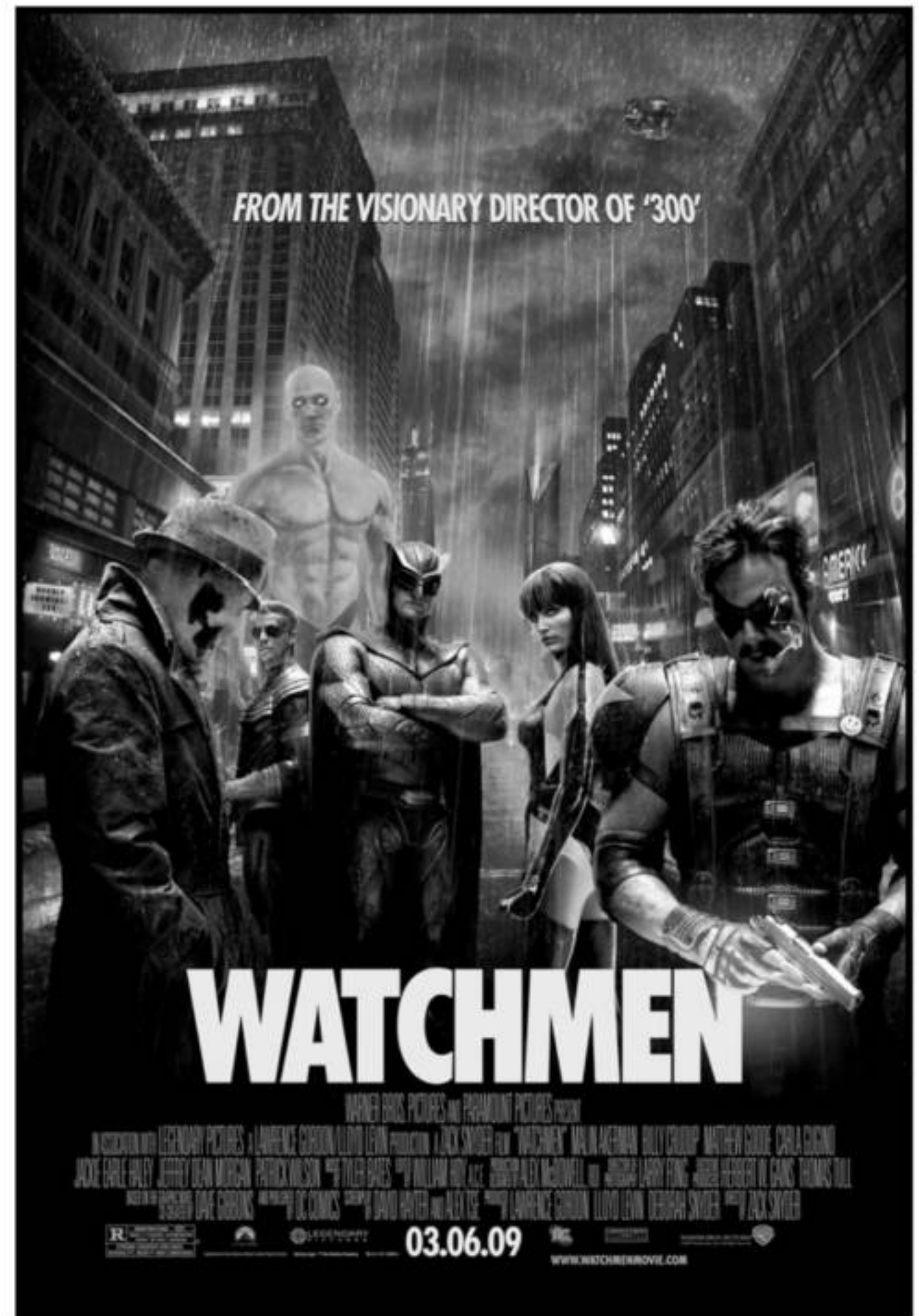


By Aaron Percival

To say I've been labeled a geek most of my life, my experience with these "essential" reads is limited. Most of my early years I focused my geekdom on franchises such as *Alien*, *Star Trek* and *Stargate*; I was very limited in my exposure to other franchises. I'm trying to branch out a little more now – so recently I turned my sights towards *Watchmen*, a story I hadn't really thought about in years.

I was working at a theater when *Watchmen* first came out. I remember there being quite a fuss about it, but it was the first time I'd heard about *Watchmen*. Turns out it was a bit of a big deal and that the original comic was a classic.

I remember not being overly fussed with the film adaptation at the time. Why – I can't really remember. I also remember us having some promotional comics



in and I really wasn't interested due to the old art-work.

So a few weeks back I sat down and re-watched the movie for the first time since its initial release. And I absolutely loved it. I thought it was an intensely mature and twisted tale on the super-hero concept. Well, I suppose 'masked-hero' would be a more appropriate term for *Watchmen*. I had been talking about it at work when one of the guys had offered to lend me the original book.

It's an extremely different take on the concept of super-heroes. The characters in *Watchmen* aren't mutants; they weren't bitten by radioactive spiders or gifted with magic rings. They are (for the most part) ordinary men and women who wear costumes to fight crime. I say "for the most part" because *Watchmen* also includes probably one of my favorite super-heroes in the



Dr. Manhattan.

form of Jon Osterman aka Dr Manhattan.

He's a scientist who accidentally gets caught in an experiment and has his body ripped apart at the subatomic level, leaving only pure consciousness. This consciousness then learns to reassemble itself and returns in the form of a naked blue humanoid with an understanding of everything. He can see particles, he can perceive time like no human can and he can rearrange the subatomic structure of literally everything and anything.

Even more interesting is that throughout the book he loses his grasp on what it is to be human. He forgets simple things such as the need to breath, his concept of emotions is totally void. I dare say he simply *exists* within the human world. An analogy for everyday life, maybe? For those who just drift through life?

I don't know how appropriate that would have been for the 1980s when *Watchmen* was written but it certainly resonated with me. I used to work in an unemployment center and I would witness these aimless people coming in, looking for work, *any* work so they could just live. And that kind of employment is soul destroying. I'd be lying if I said I hadn't felt like this at times. Just existing and being completely directionless in life and I'm positive anyone reading this who says they haven't felt like that at times would be lying.

I'd also go as far as to say Nite Owl is very close to a Batman-like character in that his abilities come from money and a lot of cool gadgetry such as Archie, his Owl inspired ship. These two characters



Nite Owl.

represent the most atypical super-heroes within the story.

But going back to Dr Manhattan and his losing touch with humanity – this is what *Watchmen* explores more than anything else, in my opinion. The bulk of the story takes place in the “present”, that being 1985 in an alternative world where masked-heroes were commonplace throughout the early 20th century, and where America won Vietnam due to Dr. Manhattan (easily one of my favorite scenes in the adaptation). We're also privy to flashbacks to various points in the characters' past.

It's an exploration of these characters' lives after the outlawing of masked vigilantes and an exploration of the post-atomic age. When I discussed the book with others, I was told that it was a product of the time it was written, in the fear of atomic weapons and the end of the world but in all honesty, I can't speak to that. Those aspects of the book didn't resonate with me.

It truly is the exploration of these damaged characters that I found most intriguing. Sure, other comic series explore the effect the alter-egos of their characters have on their lives, but *Watchmen* really sinks its teeth into it. I mean, it really takes a huge bite out of it and shakes it around like a T-Rex toying with its prey. These people are all damaged in some form or another and I really found the depth of their complexity fascinating. I'd go as far as to call it a wonderful character study.



Rorschach.

A good chunk of the story's narration is told through Rorschach and his “diary” delving into what he considers to be a conspiracy against the masked-heroes. His view on the world is very black-and-white and as the book takes us deeper into his psyche, we're privy to his twisted past, how he comes to be who he is, and why his world view is so narrow...

...But as the story progresses and reaches its climax, we're left with a very morally ambiguous decision that for Rorschach isn't so hard to make. But, is his conclusion the right one? Is the world truly that black-and-white?

Alluding back to Dr. Manhattan and my comment about him simply existing in the world, another aspect of the story that somewhat resonates with



Silk Spectre.

ical representation.

I'm not gonna to lie to you; I dislike the style of the older comics. Being relatively new to the whole scene, I've come into it with the newer technologies available to artists, to a detailed and colorful style of artwork. I haven't grown up through the evolution of the comics. This might not make me friends but I find the older styles immensely bland.

And for me, *Watchmen* is no different. Dave Gibbons fills the book with flat and dull colors, backgrounds change color and the overall the style isn't immensely detailed. What is brought into the panels though, are background details. There are little bits here and there that add minor depth to the pages such as the signs on the walls.

However, in the end I really didn't care about how dated the book looked because the story just drew me in too much. I may have primarily praised the character exploration aspects so far, but the overall story itself is just as interesting.

Watchmen opens with the death of one of the masked-heroes and we read on as Rorschach begins investigating what he believes is a conspiracy to kill more of their kind. The narrative of the present is split up with flashbacks exploring the characters' pasts, a pretty typical storytelling device.

As well as this, though, Alan Moore employs the use of things such as excerpts from fictional autobiographies, or magazine articles to add extra depth to the world I was already engrossed in. These extra layers provided

everyday life is Laurie, Silk Spectre, who is pushed into the "career" by her mother, a masked-hero from the early '30s. I wouldn't say it's delved into too deeply but it's another example of *Watchmen* connecting with everyday concerns.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the artwork now. They always say never judge a book by its cover but when it comes to graphic novels you are going to judge the artwork as you flick through it. It's as simple as that. This is a medium of storytelling that is heavily reliant on graph-



more detail to a world and scenario that was already well-crafted through the main story itself.

As can be expected, it really isn't as simple as a killing conspiracy. If you've seen the movie, you know the general theme of the ending and the graphic novel follows the same theme, but the details are significantly different. I really don't want to go into details about the different ending because I'll let you experience this.

At the very core of the story, the book is about bringing the world together. It is about uniting people of all races and all creeds. Admittedly *Watchmen* does include the conflict between America and Russia, a conflict that isn't as prominent now as it was back then but it is about helping people, about bringing these bitter enemies together. It is very idealistic. But then isn't that what comics are about? About good-vs-evil? About this idyllic world where the good guys prevail and everyone gets along?

But to what extent should the good guys go to achieve that? When does it become unacceptable?

What is most interesting is the questions it leaves you with. "What would I do in that situation?" And again, this brings us back to Rorschach's black-and-white view on the world. It really isn't that simple. It really isn't as easy as good-vs-evil. And the question of *what would you do* is the sign of a good storyteller.

Alan Moore crafted a simply wonderful story. A mature, intensely thought provoking and engrossing story that has captured my attention more so than any I've read for a while. If you haven't already I really recommend reading this book, especially if you've seen and enjoyed the film. With DC bringing out a new series of prequel comics, it'd be a great time to get reading.



DC's *Before Watchmen* prequel series.

MURDER UNIVERSITY

By Chris Hallock

Independent genre filmmaker Richard Griffin is an astute student of exploitation cinema. Nestled in picturesque Providence, his production company, Scorpio Film Releasing, has been putting out some of the most authentic love letters to drive-in cinema out there. His work is satirical, often hilarious homage to bygone eras – from the atomic age of 50's alien invasion films (*Atomic Brain Invasion*), to quirky and horrific 60's melodrama (*Exhumed*). In over a decade of constant production, he's honored nearly every touchstone of B-movie and drive-in cinema.

Griffin doesn't resort to gimmicks in order to slap a trendy grindhouse label on his work. Instead, he crafts them with a keen eye for the details of the period. Anyone who really remembers the great period of drive-in movies, grindhouse theaters, and even the 80's video store boom, knows that some really talented artists working in exploitation genres took their work seriously, and delivered potent, and even artful films. Sure, there are the sleazy gorefests and inferior Italian rip offs of popular films, not that there's anything wrong with that. However, people making films in that era were expected to know their tools, learn their lines, and deliver a complete film within incredibly strained parameters. Griffin and his crew, rather than glamorize the mistakes of poorly executed films (bad lighting, awful dubbing), choose instead to highlight the craftsmanship of many fine B-movies. Because of this,

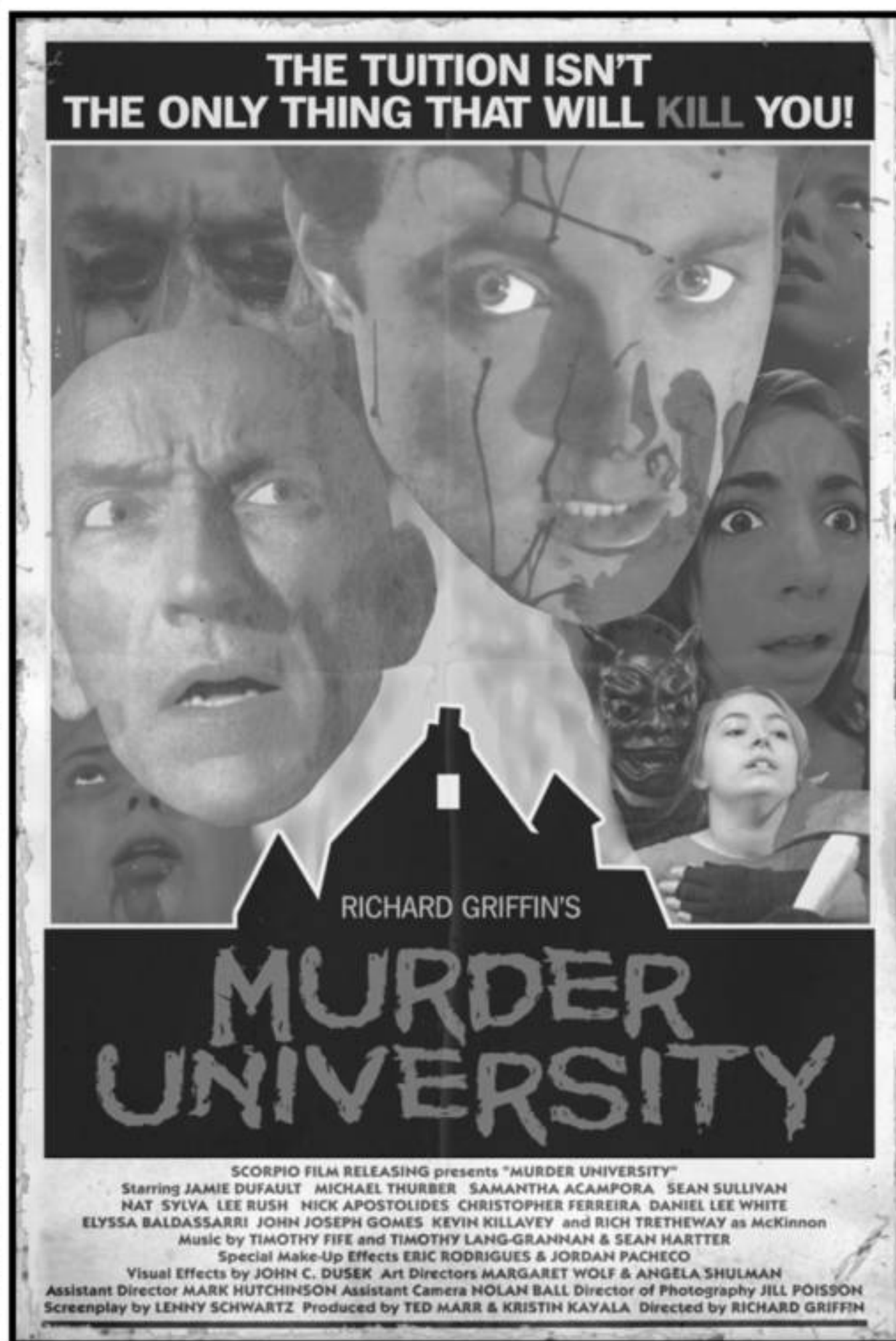
Griffin's style is recognizable, and the films take on a life of their own.

It's appropriate that Griffin's latest offering, *Murder University*, takes place on a college campus. He's the perfect example of the student becoming the master. *Murder U* is an ode to 80's slasher films, and here, Griffin has an opportunity to show his expertise in the one genre he's yet to tackle. The film is written by playwright Lenny Schwartz of the DayDream theater company in Providence. It's the writer's first foray into the horror genre. With Griffin at the helm, Schwartz's screenplay pokes fun at popular slasher films of the 80's while retaining enough originality and tension to hold its own as a solid representation of the genre.

"I have an allergic reaction to filmmakers who say 'We're going to reinvent the horror genre,'" says Griffin. "Nobody's going to

reinvent the genre, and the thing is...it doesn't need it. I didn't want to parody or satire the slasher genre, I just wanted to make a slasher film, pure and simple. But, obviously, Lenny and my personality and interests come through and, hopefully, give the material our own stamp."

I was privileged to attend the world premiere of *Murder University*, debuting at Cinema World in Lincoln, Rhode Island. The film stars Griffin stalwarts



Jamie Dufault and Michael Thurber, along with newcomer Samantha Acampora. Dufault plays Josh Greene, a reserved Freshman at Greensboro College. The college is the site of terrible cult-like murders on the campus, killings that resemble similar murders 20 years prior. Josh teams up with hardened detective Forrester (Thurber) and his plucky daughter Meg (Acampora) to infiltrate the school and find a killer believed to be associated with the university's ruling class. As fans of Griffin's work have come to expect, the film is peppered with hilarious social commentary, raunchy sex, outrageous violence, and, yes, a twisted musical number.

Griffin and his partners avoid the trappings of retreading iconic psychos like Jason and Freddy, and instead delves into a story of mystery and conspiracy on the college campus. According to Griffin, "It was definitely more of an attempt to go with the mystery angle, more than just the masked killer slashing up coeds. It's funny, because when I pitched the project to Lenny Schwartz, the writer, I told him I just wanted to make a small movie with like six characters at a college being stalked by a killer. Very *Friday the 13th* basic, you know? Well, as it always tends to happen with us, the project became considerably more ambitious."

Murder University truly looks like a film pulled from a time capsule thanks to the stunning cinematography of Jill Poisson (*The Disco Exorcist*). Together with Griffin, the two channel the style of Bava and Argento with splashes of moody color and striking



compositions. Griffin had this to say about the look of the film: "Well, if you look at almost all my films you'll see that fascination with the Italian lighting aesthetic. I really believe that directors like Bava and Argento created a haunting, dream-like atmosphere with just their use of colors. I think that's something that's really missing from cinema today."

A pulsing score by Timothy Fife and Timothy Lang-Grannan accompanies the film, one clearly influenced by the best collaborations of John Carpenter and Alan Howarth. The music is almost a character



unto itself, and a worthy addition to a soundtrack collector's shelf. According to Griffin, "One of the things I admire most about it is it's never 'cute', it's never trying to pay homage or scream, 'Hey, I'm an 80's horror soundtrack!'...it just IS an 80's horror soundtrack! I actually listen to it at home without the movie... and it's extremely beautiful."

Given the limitations of the budget, the special makeup effects by John Dusek are impressive. Griffin says this is the goriest Scorpio Film Releasing product to date. Gorehounds will certainly be pleased with the numerous

decapitations and arterial sprays used to decorate Greensboro's hallowed halls.

When asked of his plans for *Murder University* following the premiere, he had this to say: "Well, based on the success of the premiere...we already have another screening set up (on the 26th of August at Cinema World at the Lincoln Mall at the time of interview). From there, I'm hoping for a lot more theatrical screenings. I think it's a movie that plays best on a big screen in front of a large audience. And, somewhere down the line, we'll start looking for a distributor. There's already been a couple of interested parties, but we'll wait and see!"



For more information on Richard Griffin, Scorpio Film Releasing, and *Murder University*, please visit <http://ScorpioFilmReleasing.net>

T COLLECTING TRENDMASTERS

AN INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN SHYMAN

Collecting can be an art, especially when it comes to pop-culture goods. Only a true collector knows the gratifying reward of the hard work that goes into tracking down and acquiring a particularly rare comic book, movie poster, model kit, prop, or – in Jonathan Shyman's case – an action figure. And for Jonathan, it's not just any typical action figure, but the genuine *prototypes* – an often rare and elusive prize for any collector.

Shadowland was able to speak with Jonathan not only regarding his impressive collection but also about the history of Trendmasters, the focal point of his collecting. And when it comes to knowledge of Trendmasters, Jonathan is king.

SHADOWLAND MAGAZINE: To start off, could you give us a brief history of Trendmasters? How long were they active, which toylines did they produce, and why did the company ultimately fold?

JONATHAN SHYMAN: Trendmasters (let's use TM for short), was an American company that began in 1989 and ultimately closed in the fall of 2002. It was created by two former toy designers for Mattel: Leo Hauser & Russell Hornsby, although I do believe it was Hornsby who was the big fish behind the company. When TM was at its peak, they were the third largest toy company under Mattel. These two founders met while working for some other gift maker company in St. Louis, where TM was located, and began their operation out of Hornsby's basement in the early days. Amazing to see where that led to! They made a bunch of very popular lines and really got their early start with the popular pumpkin head blow mold lamps (\$4 million in sales), and the StarCastles (miniature castles and figures) line which was huge for little girls, with over \$16 million in sales. While TM's head office was located in St. Louis, Missouri, they also had an office in Hong Kong, where most of the toy prototypes were made, and apparently another office in New York, according to the addresses that appear in their official Salesmen Dealer Catalogs. As well, in the UK, they used the company Bluebird Toys PLC as their distributor there.

Some of the major toy licenses TM had acquired included: *Casper the Ghost*, *Lost in Space* (the old TV show and the 1998 movie version), *War Planets*, *Shadow Raiders* (both of these primarily released in Canada mainly, due to the show the toys were based on, being created

in Vancouver BC.), *Dexter's Laboratory*, *The Iron Giant*, *Osmosis Jones* (unreleased), *Godzilla* – and there are several lines of *Godzilla*, like *Godzilla King of the Monsters*, *Godzilla Wars*, *Doom Island*, the 1998 movie line, and of course *Godzilla the Series*. They also had *Tarzan*, *Battlefield Earth*, *Gamera*, *Voltron*, *ID-4: Independence Day*, *Extreme Ghostbusters*, *SPYKids* (unreleased), *Gumby*, *HallowScream* (a bunch of different Halloween pumpkins & monsters that would light up etc...), the *Tales from the Crypt* (with the Crypt Keeper), some plushies from the *Jumangi* film, *Mars Attacks*, *Nova's Ark*, *Power Puff Girls*, *Rumble Wars/Rumble Cars*, *C-Watches*, *C-Games*, *Cubix*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Austin Powers*, and the Coca-Cola bears, just to name a few. I know for example with the C-Watches TM made, they were only allowed to do a *Star Wars* C-Watch and nothing else from the franchise, because Kenner & Mattel would become very threatening if anything else associated with *Star Wars* was ever produced from other toy companies. This type of stuff is always interesting to note.

I think TM reached its peak around 1996-1999, grossing over \$137 million on many of their popular lines. TM often picked up the toy lines other major companies weren't too interested in, like *Tarzan* (which I admit wasn't their best line, but still I have a few nice resin *Tarzan* prototype figures used at Toy Fair, which were Paint Master Samples). *Gumby* was another one of these, (as weird as he is, everybody knows *Gumby*), and *I Dream of Jeannie*. They took on *ID-4: Independence Day*, which was nothing impressive, for me anyways, but apparently the toys sold well.

TM picked up a lot of steam when they acquired the *Godzilla* license in 1994 from Toho Co. Ltd. This turned out to be perfect timing for the company because *Godzilla* had pretty much faded away in North America, even though there was a recent boom going on in Japan at the time. Their first introduction into the market was with the *Godzilla King of the*



Monsters line, using the five popular characters at the time: MechaGodzilla, Mothra, Rodan, Ghidorah, and of course Godzilla himself. From what I have heard from some of the ex-TM employees, Mothra was eventually replaced with another character, which I think was due to poor sales of that figure. Their next Godzilla series was the mighty *Godzilla Wars* line, which introduced quite a few more monsters to keep all the fans coming back for more, like Moguera, Anguirus, SpaceGodzilla and even Biollante. Although many fans were quite surprised and disappointed to see the Biollante figure appear with legs. For me, I prefer Biollante with legs; I would most likely agree with TM and go with the fact that this adds to more of the “battle play action” which suited these particular figures and most of the boy’s toys they made. Apart from the many Godzilla prototypes I own, I am honestly not the biggest Godzilla fan, although the irony is, I have the most amount of Godzilla prototypes than any of their other lines, so go figure. The next and third *Godzilla* series TM planned was the ill-fated *Godzilla Doom Island* line, which is my favorite of their classic *Godzilla* figures. I loved the name and the packaging design, even though it was originally to be called “Monster Island”. I’m glad it was switched to *Doom Island* instead. Regardless, that didn’t matter, because this line pretty much went unreleased, except for a limited number of these figures being held as prize giveaways and purchases over the TM website. There was however, more of these *Doom Island* figures showing up for sale in Asia only. I’m not exactly sure why this line was never officially released in North America, because it was slated to be the biggest and best *Godzilla* line-up to that date. I consider myself to be very fortunate that I have a pretty extensive line of the prototypes, which were all unreleased, along with all six of the carded 5” figures, and the three dinosaur box sets. There are maybe two or three figures from this line I do not own... yet, but one never knows from month to month what will present itself later on...

I would imagine with TM already having the license to *Godzilla*, it was only natural for them to continue on with the 1998 movie license, along with the incredible unreleased *Godzilla the Series* animated toy line, which for me was my absolute favorite of all the *Godzilla* figures they produced. Again, I feel very fortunate to pretty much own the entire line of unreleased figures, and even have some multiples and variants! I think a lot of people assume that the *Godzilla* movie line was the real reason for the company closing, but in fact the *Godzilla* movie was from 1998 and TM continued on pretty strong after that for a few more years. I believe it was quite common for TM to pick up the movie licenses that nobody wanted (think of *Battlefield Earth* and *Osmosis Jones*), as it was part of their plan to experiment with movies that potentially ended as flops. I remember this was the case with their awesome line of unreleased *Osmosis Jones* toys from 2001. Basically the movie wasn’t a big hit, even though I thought it was brilliant, sadly nobody was interested in the toys, as all the focus at that time was on the first *Spider-Man* movie. With more than a few gambles with these failed toy lines, I think this was already well into the end of the company at that point. The earlier

lack of success of the *Mars Attacks* film didn’t help TM. Russell Hornsby decided to leave the company in the summer of 2002 to launch his new company: Cepia LLC. Cepia’s biggest success thus far has been with the *Zhu Zhu Pets* (one of the biggest selling toys in 2009), which ironically were originally developed and prototyped at TM, from what I heard. By the fall of 2002, TM was on their last leg and shut down, with their assets sold to the California company, Jakks Pacific.



SM: How did you first get interested in collecting Trendmasters toys?

JS: I have always been interested in unique toys, and came to find out about TM specifically by accident... Since having a background in cartoon animation, I always had a fondness for cool figures that captured the essence of the cartoon characters at their best. As you might be aware, with any 2D or 3D animated film, sometimes several companies may make attempts to create the figures based on these films and more often than not, they don't necessarily succeed. This is where I think TM actually came through the clouds as a much better toy company than most. And that can be said, considering they were the third largest toy company under Mattel. Upon careful inspection, many fans of Godzilla may deem TM in a good and bad light, when it came to the various Godzilla lines. Since I am not the biggest or best Godzilla fan to judge, all I know is what I liked and what I thought was a great figure, for what they created.

The irony is, I had my first TM toy in the mid 1990's and wasn't even aware it was made by TM. It was an *Extreme Ghostbusters* Slimer figure. Who doesn't love the *Ghostbusters* films? I certainly did and, like most people, took a real liking to Slimer. I primarily collect only TM's prototype figures (both of released and unreleased figures because they were always different than the retail figures). I do have a few production pieces, but they are not as interesting for me in that respect. I began my collection of TM prototypes and their unreleased toys back in 2002-2003, shortly after they closed their doors. There was quite a flood of TM toys on eBay then, where some of them sold for large amounts of money and others went for next to nothing. I've said this before, and it's nothing new, but prototypes were never meant to be sold to the public, and usually ended up being destroyed – but they were often much better figures than the actual released toys. Prototypes usually had different and better molds with superior paint jobs and detail for toy shows like Toy Fair. I think it's common knowledge that many figures that appear at Toy Fair don't necessarily make it into final production. So it's my belief that any prototype should be considered rare. If TM never closed their doors, there's a very good chance most of these figures would never have been accessible, because, in most cases, they would have been destroyed and definitely never have made it to the streets, so to speak, so I know I am very fortunate to have what I have.

I still continue to look at these toys on a daily basis and just

admire the beautiful work that went into creating them. This will sound sad to say, but when my mother passed away in 2000, it really hit me hard that life is short. I used to have a very large collection of music memorabilia on the rock band The Police. But the thing was I kept everything stored away out of sight. It always bothered me because I had actually, at times, forgotten what was in my collection. I am not a materialistic person per se, but it made me realize, if I can't admire something I have on a daily basis, why do I need it?

So, around the time TM closed their doors, I started to sell off my massive collection of The Police to start funding my collection of toy prototypes made by TM. With this I had in mind that whatever I would acquire in my collection would have to be out on display for me to see on a regular basis, or there was no point in having it. It's hard to say at this point just how much my collection of TM prototypes has grown, but I have a heck of a lot more now than I had back in 2003, when I first started collecting them. I used to be known for having a pretty incredible Police collection with many rare items, but now I much prefer to be known as 'The Trendmasters Guy'!

Getting back to how it all started for me and my prototype collecting, it began with the film, *Osmosis Jones*. I'm sure it's safe to say, I probably have the largest collection of *Osmosis Jones* stuff in the world. Not sure if that really matters because the film didn't do very well, but nobody has proven me otherwise yet...

TM had produced a line of 22 different toys for this film, and I have 21 of them now. Took me a long time to find them and cost me a lot of money to dish out, but I think it was completely worth it because I loved all the characters, considering most people don't even know this toy line exists. I've had a number of people admire my *Osmosis Jones* prototype collection on my Flickr page, and ask me where I got them from. I simply tell them: You have to know where to look...

If people are interested in seeing my Flickr page, they can check it out at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/36185771@N06/>

Before I purchased my first TM prototype from *Osmosis Jones*, I was able to pick up the movie banner of Drix – the pill capsule character – that had the perfect caption: "The medication with dedication" on it, and I thought that was very clever. Every time I looked

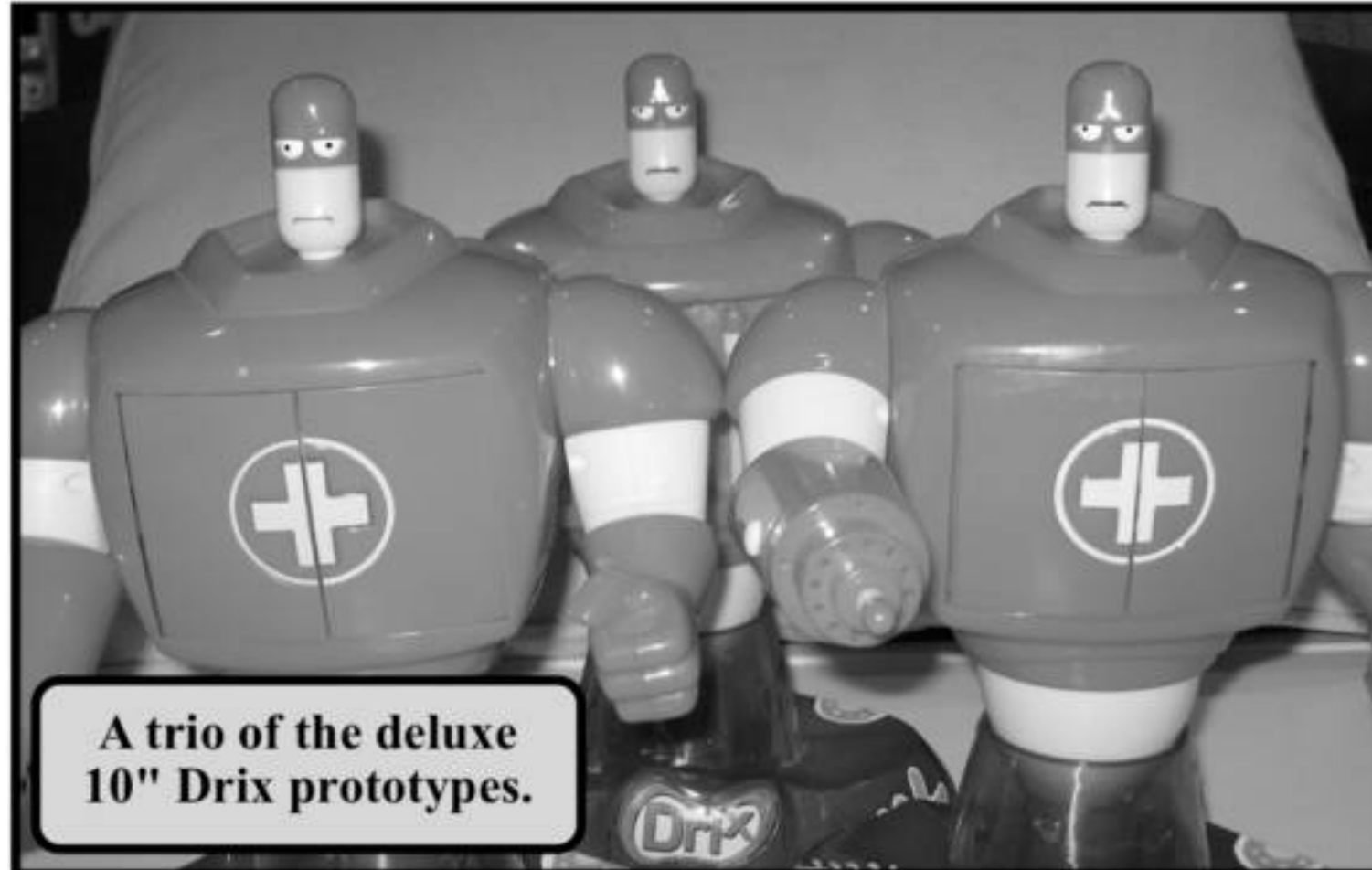


***Osmosis Jones* unreleased 2"
'Cold Capsule Critters' resin prototypes.**

at the banner of Drix, I always wondered why no figures were ever made up from this film? They often made toy lines for most other animated films, and yet this film produced nothing? Of course ticket sales play a major part in that, although often the toy lines have to be ready to be shipped long before the movie has even opened.

I've always considered myself to be pretty resourceful, so my persistence led me to do a bunch of searches online and I was able to find a tiny thumbnail of a 10" Deluxe Drix figure from the 2001 Toy Fair, and it became a very exciting moment for me. I found out the company behind this figure was called "Trendmasters", and it amazed me how cool this toy was, just as I imagined it would be, (had they been released).

I continued my search and had a look on eBay right then and there, and to my surprise discovered a set of both the Deluxe Osmosis Jones and Drix 10" prototype figures being offered for sale! Well, as luck would have it, when the time came for me to place my bid on eBay, my computer froze and I lost out. Now that wasn't a very happy moment for me back then. But, this is where I decided to try a different approach. I did more research into the company, and ended up using my resourcefulness to send out about 800 emails (no joke), after literally going thru 8000 listings on eBay, in search of other owners of these prototype toys, since I now had confirmation they did, in fact, exist. About two weeks later I received a message from someone claiming to have all the *Osmosis Jones* toys I was looking for, plus more. He was actually the head designer of this particular toy line, so my plan paid off and I hit the jackpot.



After finally getting a hold of most of the unproduced *Osmosis Jones* figures, I decided to do some more research to uncover what other unreleased and unproduced toy prototypes Trendmasters made. I quickly discovered that TM had the toy license to the *Godzilla the Series* cartoon. When I was a child, like most kids of that time, I was into the *Godzilla* movies for the monsters, although I was never that big of a fan to want to collect any Godzilla toys. So I really didn't think much of this. But, when the 1998 Tri-Star film came out, my

curiosity had the best of me, and I went to see it. It left me feeling pretty disappointed as was the case with most of the hardcore *Godzilla* fans. However, from this film, my interest turned to this cool new animated spin-off of the film, and quite frankly in my opinion, the cartoon definitely redeemed the bad taste I had in my mouth about the 1998 film. The cartoon picked up

where the movie left off, but the series had a much better edge. Finally this *Godzilla* was back to battling monsters and they actually gave him something to do.

So, upon Googling TM, trying to discover what other toys they produced, I caught a photo of the awesome Cyber-Godzilla prototype figure, and was once again completely amazed – blown away was more like it! I thought it was a wicked figure in a totally dynamic pose and captured the cartoon likeness perfectly. And I couldn't believe my luck when, just like before, one of these Cyber-Godzilla prototypes appeared on eBay that week, and that toy I DID grab. Lucky for me my computer did not freeze up this time. The sad thing about this toy line is, they were prototyped just like the *Osmosis Jones* line, but were cancelled before the toy line went into production. The movie was a flop, and so





Two Cyber-Godzilla prototypes. Only twelve were manufactured.

studios weren't looking to take another risk to lose even more money investing on this toy line, even though *Godzilla the Series* was a very big success. When the show was cancelled after the second season, sadly, so were the toys. To this day, I still think the Cyber-Godzilla figure is one of the coolest unproduced toy prototypes I have ever seen, and one of my all time favorites. So I am proud to say I now own two of these Cyber-Godzilla prototypes!

Apparently it was common for TM to usually make about twelve figures or less of each prototype, so as you can imagine, not many of them exist. I am very fortunate to own two of these prototypes, and believe it or not, I know of another collector who has nine of them (don't ask, it's maddening!), and I recently used my resourcefulness to track down the owner of the last known one of these Cyber-Godzilla's, making up all twelve in existence. But I know there was also some resin prototype figures made as well, which in most cases would be the Paint Master Samples. These would of course be in the earlier stages of development and some of the same ones used in the official TM Dealer Catalogs as salesman samples to promote the toys.

SM: What were some of the differences between a typical Trendmasters prototype and an actual figure that was released to store shelves?

JS: To further add to this topic, a resin TM prototype is a special sample that was usually produced in their office overseas in Asia, although I do believe they had some TM sculptors working on some figures at the St. Louis Head Office. The resin samples were very fragile and never meant to last. In most cases they didn't last much longer than their appearance at all the major toy shows. They are very delicate pieces as you can imagine, and were usually sculpted by hand, unlike the retail pieces that were produced on an assembly line for mass production. They often went through several resin pieces to iron out all the 'kinks' of the figure before they were approved and ready to be molded in plastic. These are typically rarer than the plastic prototypes, simply

because many of them were one-of-a-kind figures, but more of them were produced in plastic in the form of 'test shots'. The resin prototypes were usually slightly larger than the plastic pre-production prototypes, maybe as much as an inch to three inches in size difference. I think that is a pretty significant difference, so in one sense, having both the resin and plastic prototypes is like having two completely different figures, and that interests me!



Cyber-Godzilla promo artwork.

The paint jobs and detail on the resin figures were always much better. The resins usually had longer nails and teeth and were sharper than the retail pieces. They had to be changed (made smaller and pointed pieces dulled) of course, to meet the safety

standards for children. Otherwise they would not have been approved. The resin figures also helped to attract more interest in the toys before they went into production full force, because of how real or authentic looking they appeared. I remember hearing from the head designer of the unproduced *Osmosis Jones* line that investors weren't too interested in these toys and doubted the final production pieces would even look like the prototypes. Now that does seem surprising to me, because I know a number of these prototypes shown at Toy Fair were, in fact, already made out of plastic, so there should be no questioning that, since the molds were already made and shown right then and there.

I am very lucky I have a few of my prototypes, some in resin and some in plastic, that were the very



A resin prototype of Thrax from *Osmosis Jones*. The unreleased figure was to come with three interchangeable light-up heads.

same ones featured in a couple of the TM Official Dealer Catalogs. I figured if they were good enough to be photographed for the catalogs, they must be unique and most likely one-of-a-kinds. I've got a rare 4" *Godzilla Doom Island* resin Destroyah Paint Master Sample, that appeared in a TM "Godzilla Invasion Ad", featuring a promotion for three different *Godzilla* lines: the *Godzilla* movie line, the *Doom Island* line and the *Godzilla the Series* animated line. Sadly, Destroyah's missing a leg, and I was told by the *Doom Island* production manager, who I got it from, that he never even saw the leg but knows it was there for Toy Fair.



Unproduced *Godzilla Doom Island* figure in plastic (above left) and resin (above right).

GODZILLA INVASION!
NEVER BEFORE AVAILABLE, LIMITED EDITIONS
EXCLUSIVELY AT OUR WEB STORE!
ONLY ON-LINE AT TRENDMASTERS.COM!

win!
AN EXCLUSIVE DESTROYAH®
PRODUCTION PROTOTYPE
OR ONE OF SEVERAL OTHER
DOOM ISLAND TOYS!

Godzilla Invasion ad showcasing the *Godzilla The Series* and *Doom Island* lines, along with an opportunity to win a Destroyah production prototype.

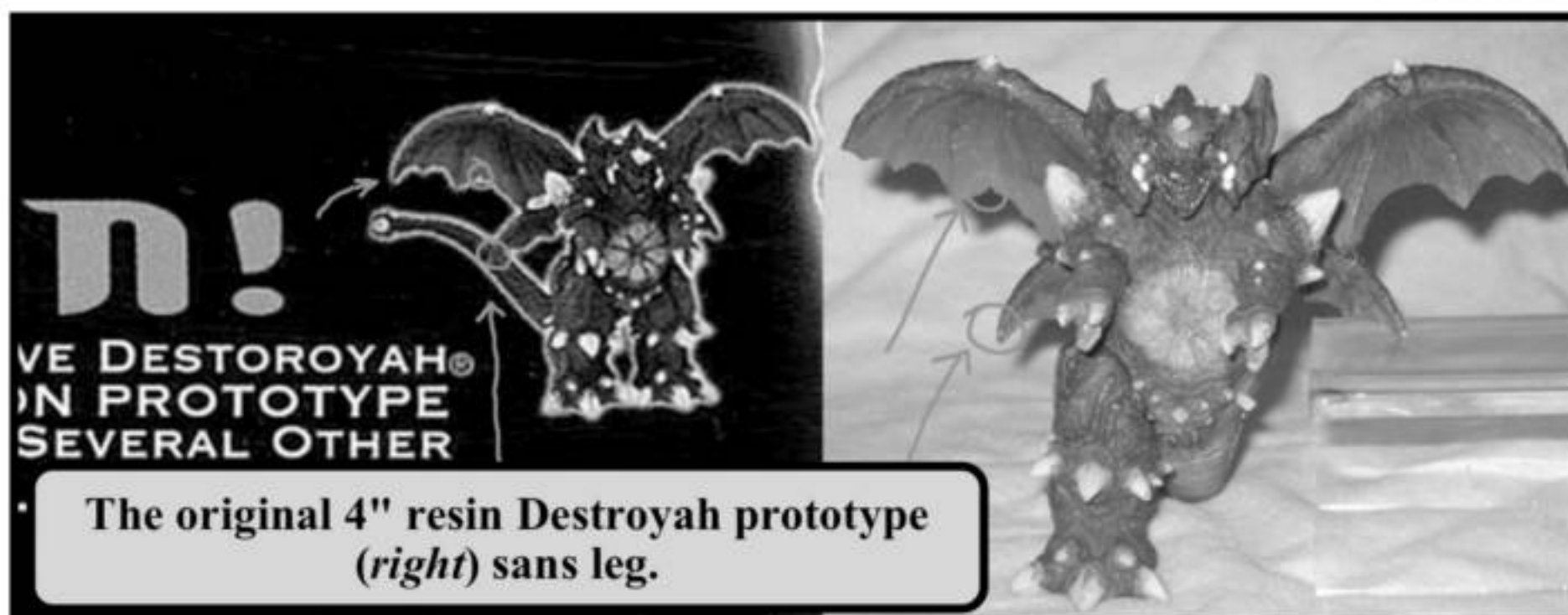
He went on to say that most of these figures were handled so poorly at these shows, it's a wonder they survived at all.

I've also got a couple of *Extreme Ghostbusters* resin prototypes, *Tarzan* resin prototypes, all four of the *Shadow Raiders* Paint Master Samples prototypes, two 7" *Osmosis Jones* resin figures and even three *Gumby* resin prototypes, that all appeared in one of the TM Catalogs. These figures to me are some of the more special ones, simply because they were used for the official promotion of those toy lines!

SM: As you mentioned, Trendmasters was responsible for an extensive line of Godzilla toys, both from the classic Toho series and the 1998 American film. A number of these figures were never released, what other G-toys were supposed to have made it to consumers, but never did?

JS: Ahhh yes... the classic Godzilla question! OK. I think when most people consider Trendmasters, they probably think of their line of Godzilla figures, because over the span of 1994-1999, there were many released. The *Godzilla* line was crucial in putting Trendmasters on the map as a serious contender of action figures. Over the years what I have learned from dealing with people is, you either love them or hate them. People that were younger kids

in the early 1990's used to love them back then, and yet today, many don't really care too much about them anymore. This brings me to something rather humorous but also relevant to mention: about two years ago, I ended up taking on close to twenty very angry TM haters on the Club Tokyo Forum. It was pretty ridiculous at that, but I felt the need to stand up to all these haters, who continually put down



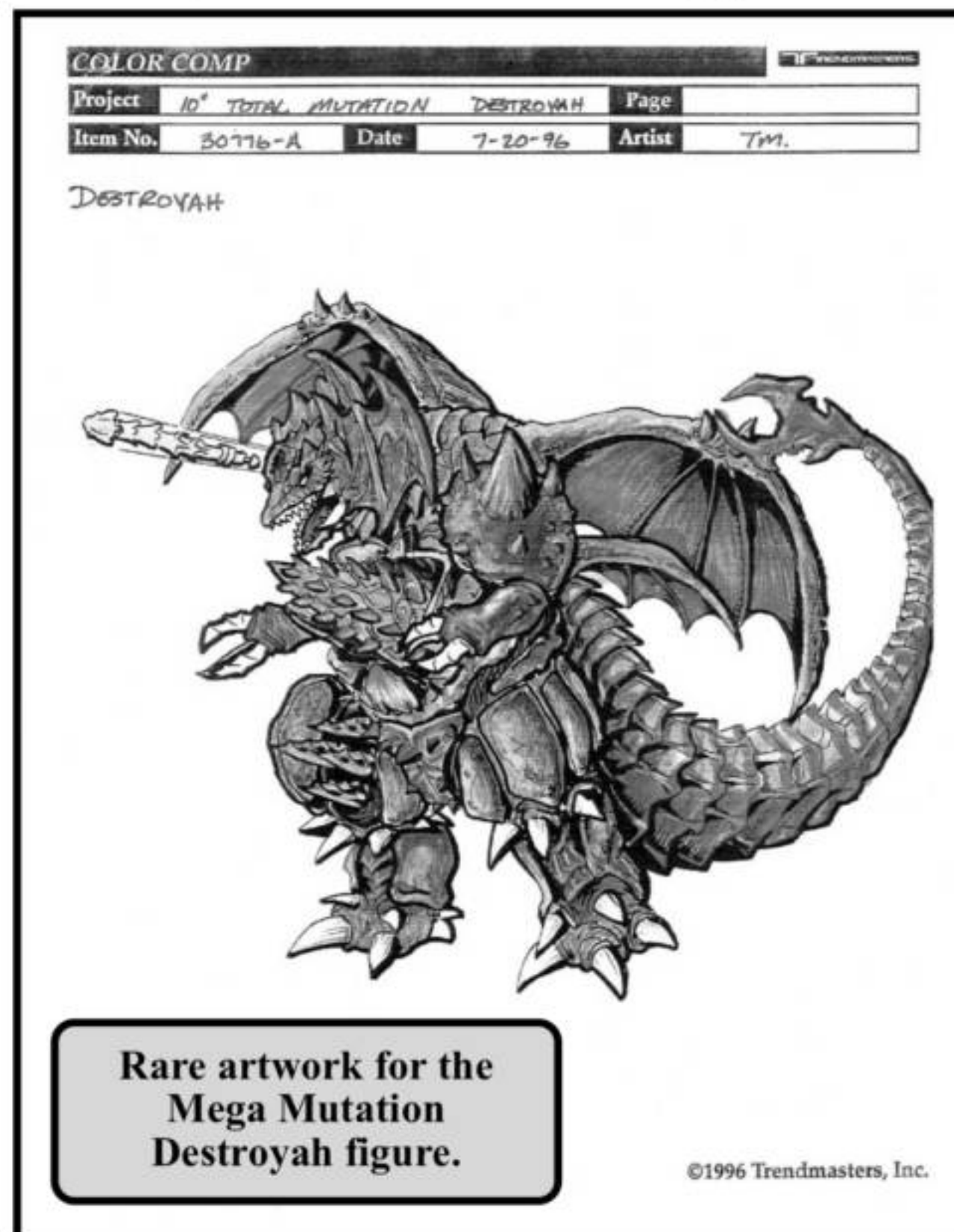
Trendmasters, specifically the Godzilla toys. They claimed all the toys were so far “off model” and nothing like their live-action counterparts, besides looking like they were all on steroids with the big muscles on them.

It eventually became so overblown I just decided to bow out, seeing that it was futile to get anyone on there to really see what I saw in the company. Now, I’m not a fan of the Bullmark or Marmit Godzilla figures by any means, but everyone is entitled to their own opinions and preferences. Most of these people on the forum seemed to favor the Bullmark and Marmit figures, and that’s okay too. But it just became an all out war of words, so I left. But my answer remains the same all these years later when people ask me, “why do you just collect toys made by Trendmasters?”, I simply tell them: Because I just find these toys have a lot of character! I had to laugh, because after all this went down, I was contacted by some other Godzilla collectors who remembered me and said stuff like: “Wow, I remember you...you took on the entire Godzilla community on Club Tokyo, and almost bought the house down! Kudos to you, for finally putting some much needed life back into that forum, which hasn’t seen that much excitement in close to 10 years!” Seems I made some people happy in the end, doesn’t it? Doesn’t matter what anyone else likes or says about them, everyone is entitled to their own interests. I’m just happy I only collect toys from this company, or we would need a much bigger house.

Now, even though the 1998 Sony *Godzilla* film bombed, being such a big disappointment with all the hardcore G-Fans (me included), I think Trendmasters still did a pretty good job in representing the new looking monster as a figure. I think it’s quite easy to forget that these were toys after all, so they were meant to be played with by children. However, I am pretty sure there are a number of people out there that collected these toys for the same reasons I did, for their collectibility. Except I was not interested in collecting the basic retail figures. I much preferred ‘the hunt’, to track down the really rare prototypes and elusive figures

that most people probably never even knew about, that I was often told I would never find, but did. These were the real gems for me, making it all worthwhile and at the same time, it’s also what bothered me, because I honestly felt many of Trendmaster’s best figures were those that remained unreleased, so nobody ever knew they existed. Sad but true. This is why I like to keep updating my Flickr Photostream with new prototypes as I get them, because a lot of what I have there is mostly their unreleased toys.

We already partially covered the ill-fated *Doom Island* line, which was slated to be the biggest and best



Godzilla line of toys for Trendmasters. Sadly, there was a serious lack of interest in them, so this line never officially saw the light of day, in North America that is. This is why the *Godzilla Doom Island* figures are so rare and hard to find. And part of this line, was the even harder to find Mega Mutation action figure prototypes, which consisted of just Destroyah and Godzilla in both 6" and 10" sizes. These figures could transform into more ‘mutated’ looking monsters. As quoted from the Official Trendmasters Dealer Catalog, these action figures were: “Changing, rearranging, and mightier than ever! Each poseable action figure has hidden weapons and transforming features.” On the Godzilla figures, when you push the button directly

between their legs, the chest bursts open, showing their exposed rib cages, and a giant spike pops out. They also have revolving spikes on top of their thighs, and big shoulder spikes that can retract back and forth. I thought these were a really cool concept, completely different, and full of character. Unfortunately these remained unreleased, but lucky for me a few prototypes made it out to the collector's market. For the Destroyah figures, they also came with a button, when pushed, had a giant spike pop out of the chest, and had a secret compartment in the thighs to unveil protruding spikes. For the larger 10" Mega Mutation action figures, these were originally dubbed as: "Big, bad and totally transforming! Poseable action figures with hidden weapons and transforming features that become mighty weapons of warfare." Keep in mind that Destroyah was never, ever released in any form by Trendmasters, so these figures are indeed very rare. I am fortunate to own all four of these Mega Mutation figures in both sizes.

With the *Doom Island* dinosaur box sets there was also supposed to be one with SpaceGodzilla vs. two different Anklyosaurus dinosaurs and Destroyah vs. Dimetron and a Pachycephalosaur dinosaur. There was also another Godzilla dinosaur box set planned with two different Triceratops. I used to have most of these above mentioned 'non-Toho' monsters in my collection, in the form of resin Paint Master prototypes, but ended up trading them for a bigger and better unreleased Trendmasters *Godzilla the Series* prototype. I also had all the original artwork that was used to make these very toy figures. At first glance, people may think the Anklyosaurus's resemble Anguirus, but that is not the case. They were a different design.

Included in the original artwork design packets were color comps and breakdowns for a few more unreleased Toho Godzilla figures: Manda, Kamacuras, and another Destroyah figure. I believe this is what my 4" resin Destroyah Paint Master is from and that all three of these monsters were intended to be part of another 4" line of figures, connected to *Doom Island*. As previously mentioned, *Doom Island* line was originally called "Monster Island", before being changed. This will be apparent on the design packets. The Kamacuras color comp sheet lists the title as 'Godzilla M.I.S.T.A.F w/o Sound Asst'. I know that translates to: "Godzilla on Monster Island...??...Action Figure Without Sound Assortment". Unfortunately I am not exactly sure what the S.T. stands for. To my understanding there was a



The Dinosaurs of Doom Island!
Above: Unreleased resin Anklyosaurus.
Below: Unreleased resin Ticeratops.

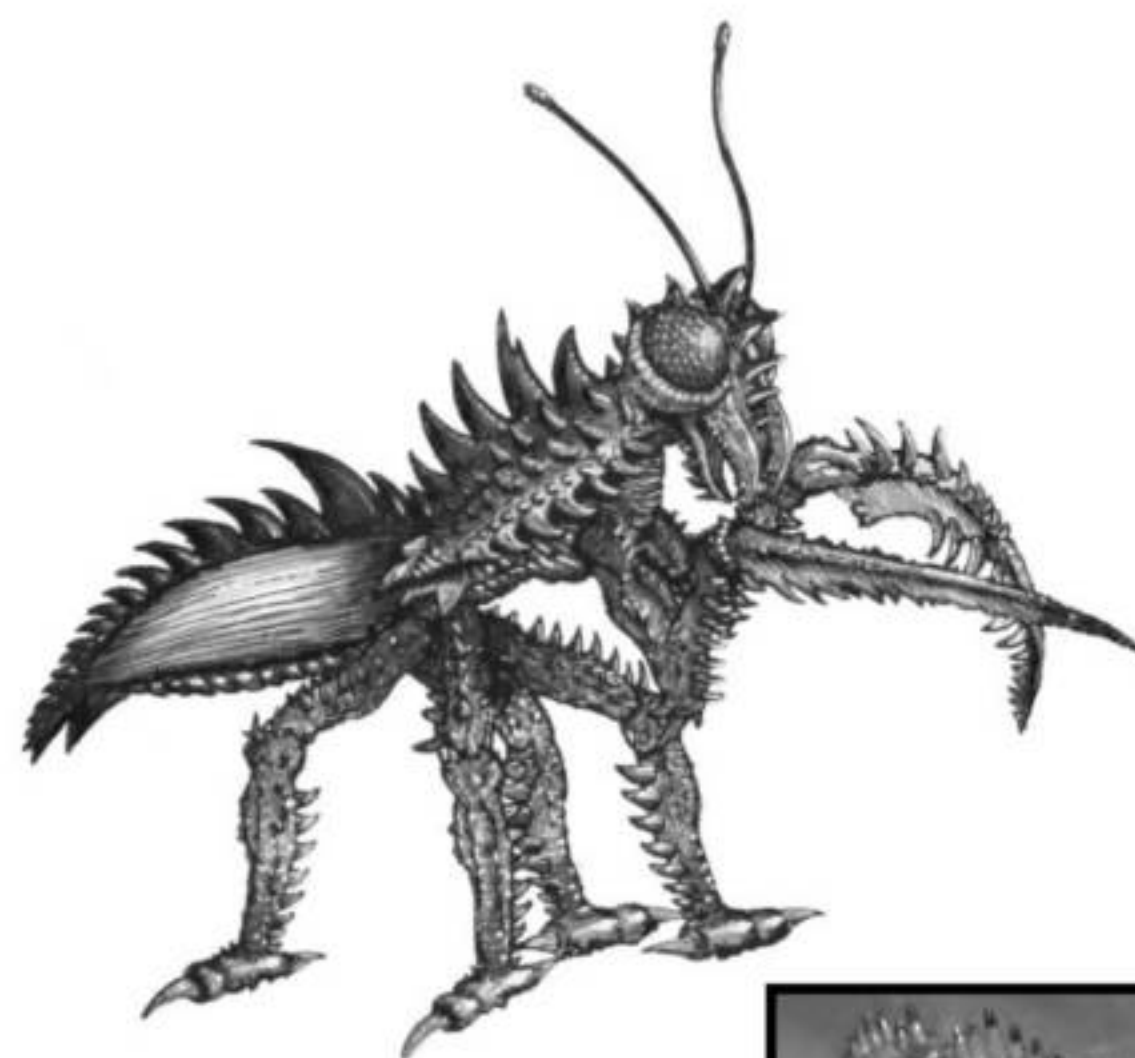
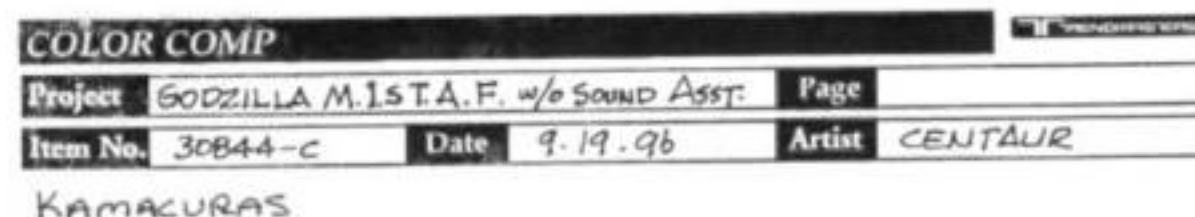


resin 4" Kamacuras prototype (I do not own this piece), and I have included a tiny photo of it from the '96 Toy Fair, but I do not have any other info on it, sadly.

Of course it's definitely possible that there was more figures planned for the classic *Godzilla* lines, but I really cannot confirm that, even with all the contacts from the company that I have. I do know that the responses I have read about the 4" Manda, Kamacuras and Destroyah figures were very positive.



Above: Manda concept art.

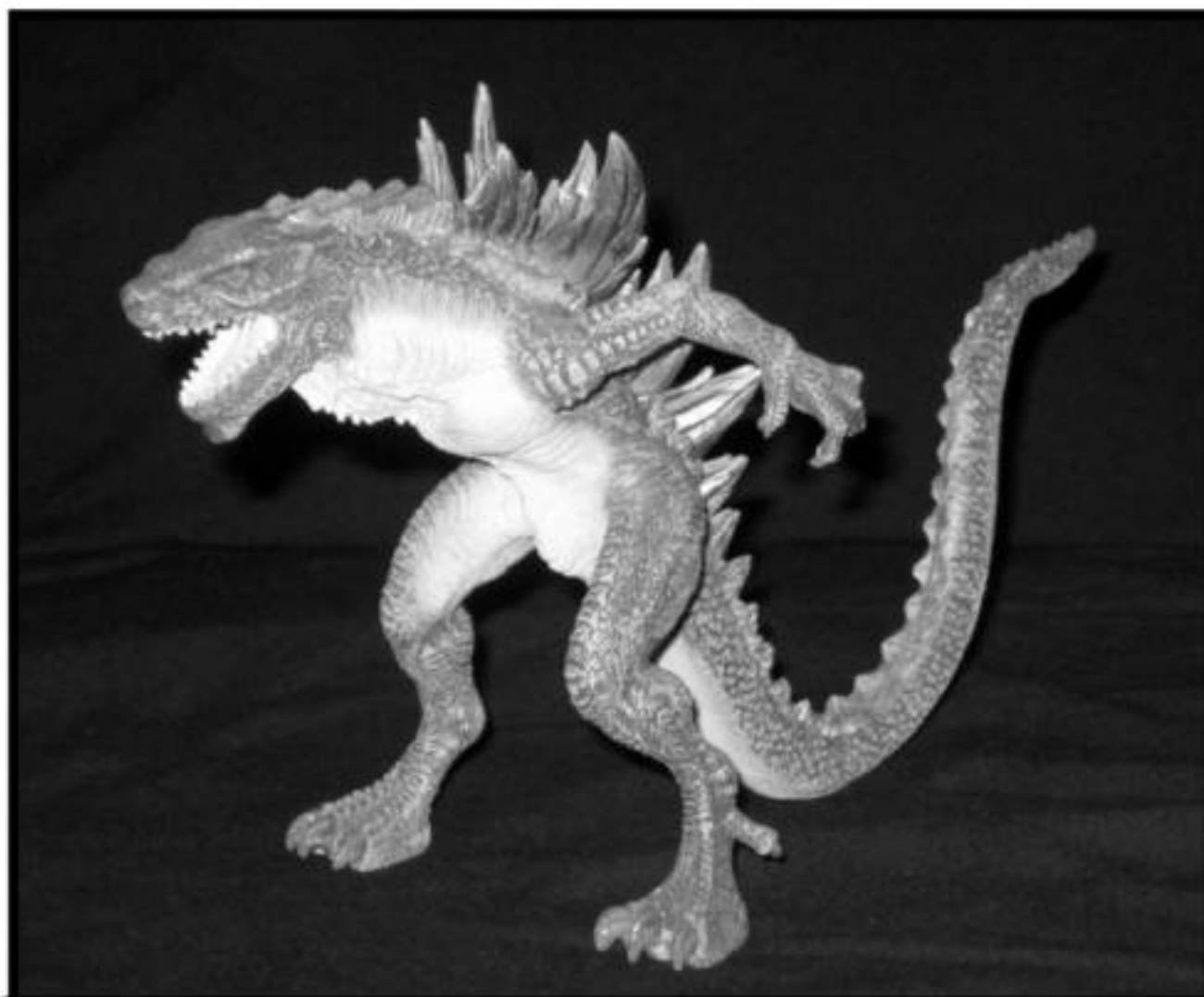


Artwork design packet for the Kamacuras figure and 4" resin prototype (right).

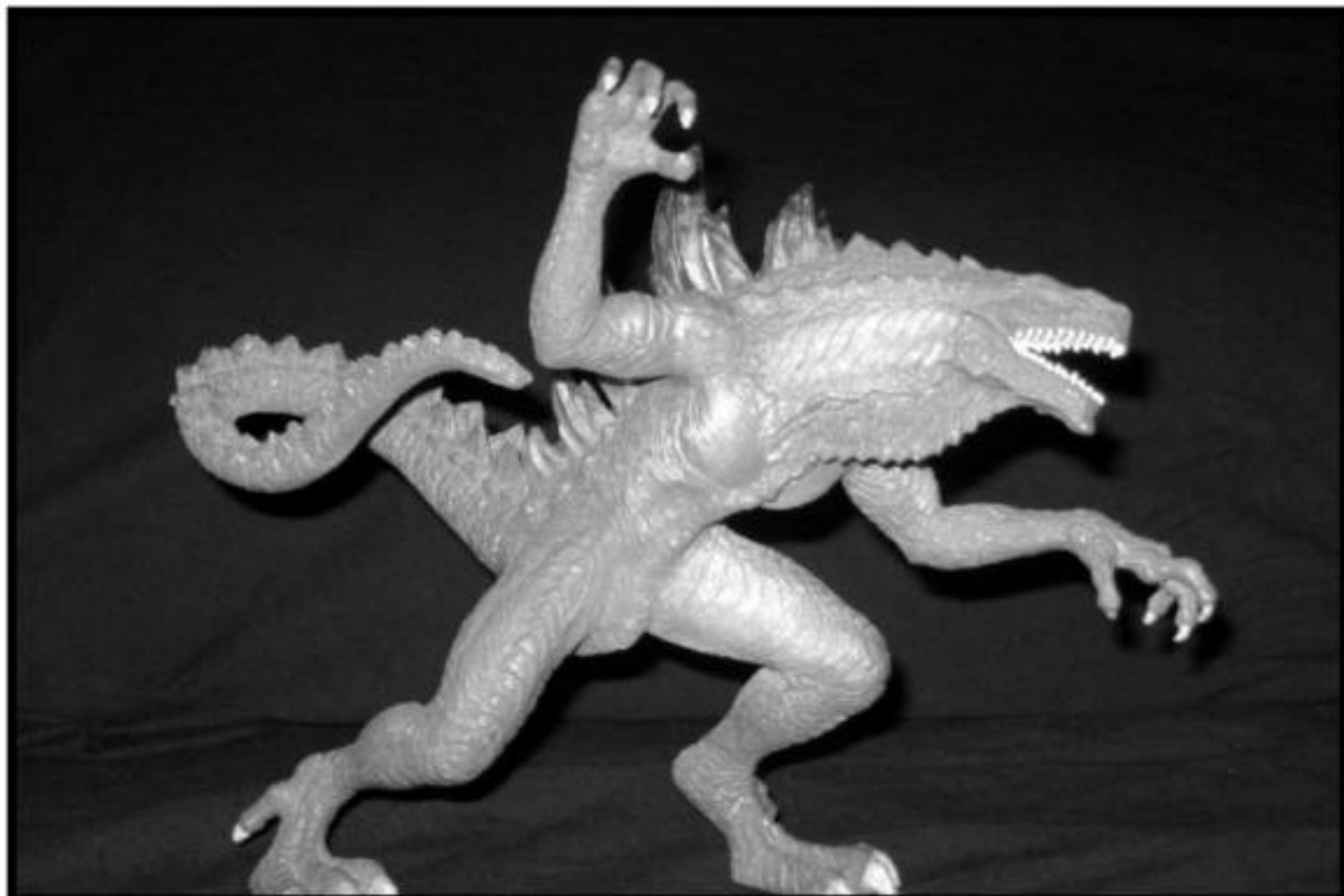


Moving on to the 1998 Sony *Godzilla* film with Matthew Broderick, I am aware that Trendmasters did have a second series of *Godzilla* movie figures planned if the first wave sold well. We all know how that turned out, so the second series was scrapped altogether. This was another shame, because I heard from a couple of the designers who were working on these figures and they told me the second series was actually far better than the original releases. Once again, I'm very fortunate to own one of these *Godzilla* prototypes from the planned second series. The person who designed it originally just labeled it as 'The Emerald Green *Godzilla*', simply because it was fully painted in 'emerald' and lime green colors and had amazing translucent green fins. Without a doubt this is by far the nicest looking unreleased *Godzilla* figure from the entire movie line that nobody even knows was planned. It's solid resin, the only one of it's kind, and is a marvel to look at. It has a fantastic stance, very dynamic, and full of character. A perfect example of why I like these Trendmasters prototypes. I also own another slightly smaller unreleased resin *Godzilla* figure, also from the movie line, but this one was intended to be part of yet another series of *Godzilla* action figures. Designed by the same person that created the Emerald Green *Godzilla* prototype, this one he called the 'Roar *Godzilla*', because it's in a real 'taunting' pose. When I first looked at it, it reminded me of a more mature looking Baby *Godzilla*, but I was told it is indeed a full on adult version of the big-G and just a variation – again, another beautiful one-of-a-kind figure, with a fantastic paint job, in grays, whites and wicked green fins. They're both absolutely beautiful, and blow away the retail *Godzilla* movie toys that were released.

Lastly we come to my favorite of all the unreleased *Godzilla* action figures – the canceled *Godzilla the Series* toy line, based on the cartoon, which continued where the '98 movie left off. Now this cartoon was way better than the movie, and all the fans pretty much agreed, because *Godzilla* was back to doing what he was supposed to do: BATTLE

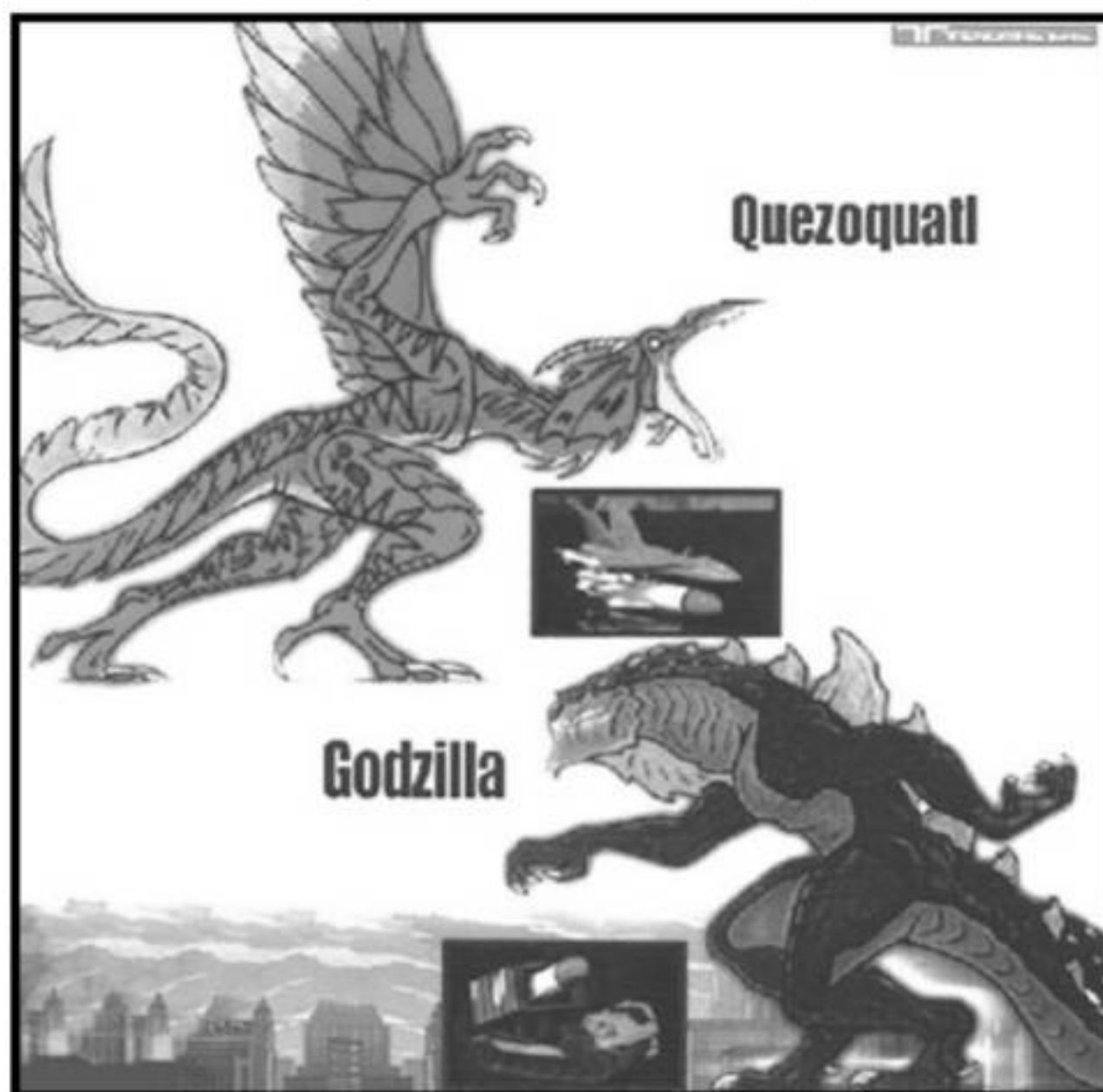


*Above/Below: The resin 'Roar *Godzilla*'.*



*Above: The only one of it's kind - the 'Emerald Green' *Godzilla* prototype, striking a ferocious pose.*

other MONSTERS, he had his nuclear fire breath in tact, and didn't run and hide underground or in high-rise buildings like the creature in the movie did. And every episode, in the forty that were produced, had a new and exciting monster (or "mutation" as they were called in the show) for him to fight. You can imagine now why the Cyber-Godzilla is my favorite Godzilla figure. It's a take on the classic MechaGodzilla of course, but fits in with the ending of the Matthew Broderick film, as the Cyber-Godzilla is the reanimated corpse of the Godzilla that died on the bridge at the end of the movie. Back in 2003, when I found out that this animated line was planned, but completely scrapped, I made it my mission to track down the entire set of unreleased prototypes. I pretty much completed that goal, although there is but one creature I did not get, the Quezoquatl prehistoric giant bird creature. For the *Godzilla the Series* toys (let's call it *G:tS*, to make things easier), they had planned to make two Deluxe Mega Monsters with sound: a 10" Godzilla and a 10" Cyber-Godzilla, a smaller 6" Thunder Sonic Godzilla with sound, and 4"-5" figures of the Robo-Yeti, Crustaceous Rex (C-Rex for short), N.I.G.E.L. and 3.5" versions of Randy and Nick, although a figure of Monique was also planned, but never prototyped. I have all these figures except the infamous Quezoquatl. I was however, able to track



down the person who does have two of the figures, but he refuses to sell them. He had told me that he was only aware of four of them made in resin, in two different colors, orange and yellow, and the other more closely resembling it's appearance in the TV show, in



browns, red, and yellow. He owns one of each, and I haven't been able to get him to provide any photos. This is the one figure that has eluded me for so long, and it remains a real mystery. Even the designer of this figure draws a blank on it saying, "...that's a whole other story..." and that's it. It has slowly driven me mad, but I have come to accept that I don't think it will ever end up in my collection.

I had previously done a very in-depth article with *Sci-Fi Japan* just on these 'lost' *G:tS* toys, so if you do a Google search, you'll come across it and see a lot of these figures in my collection. Sadly all these toys were cancelled...it was a real shame because the cartoon had really good ratings and was even the number one program with younger children ages 6-12 years old, and also brought back a renewed interest to Godzilla fans. But because of money lost from the Godzilla movie line of action figures, retailers were not interested in any more Godzilla products at the time. The advance orders for these *G:tS* toys were so low, Trendmasters cancelled the line before it went into production...

So this was all relative as to why TM discontinued their *Godzilla* line. Weak sales will destroy anything in any business. Trendmasters placed huge amounts of product for the movie launch and after the movie buzz ended, the sales dipped way down, which is not usually a surprise and is even normal for licensed toys, but the retailers were dealing with a little too much extra merchandise here and there, so the plug was pulled.

SM: Since we're on the subject of Godzilla, Trendmasters had also released a short-lived line of Gamera figures. Are you aware if Trendmasters had any plans to produce more figures of Gamera, or his enemies?

JS: The Trendmasters *Gamera* line was short-lived simply because it was not making any money, so there was no reason to continue it any longer. As for any plans to produce any other Gamera figures of his enemies, the answer to that was no, that was it.

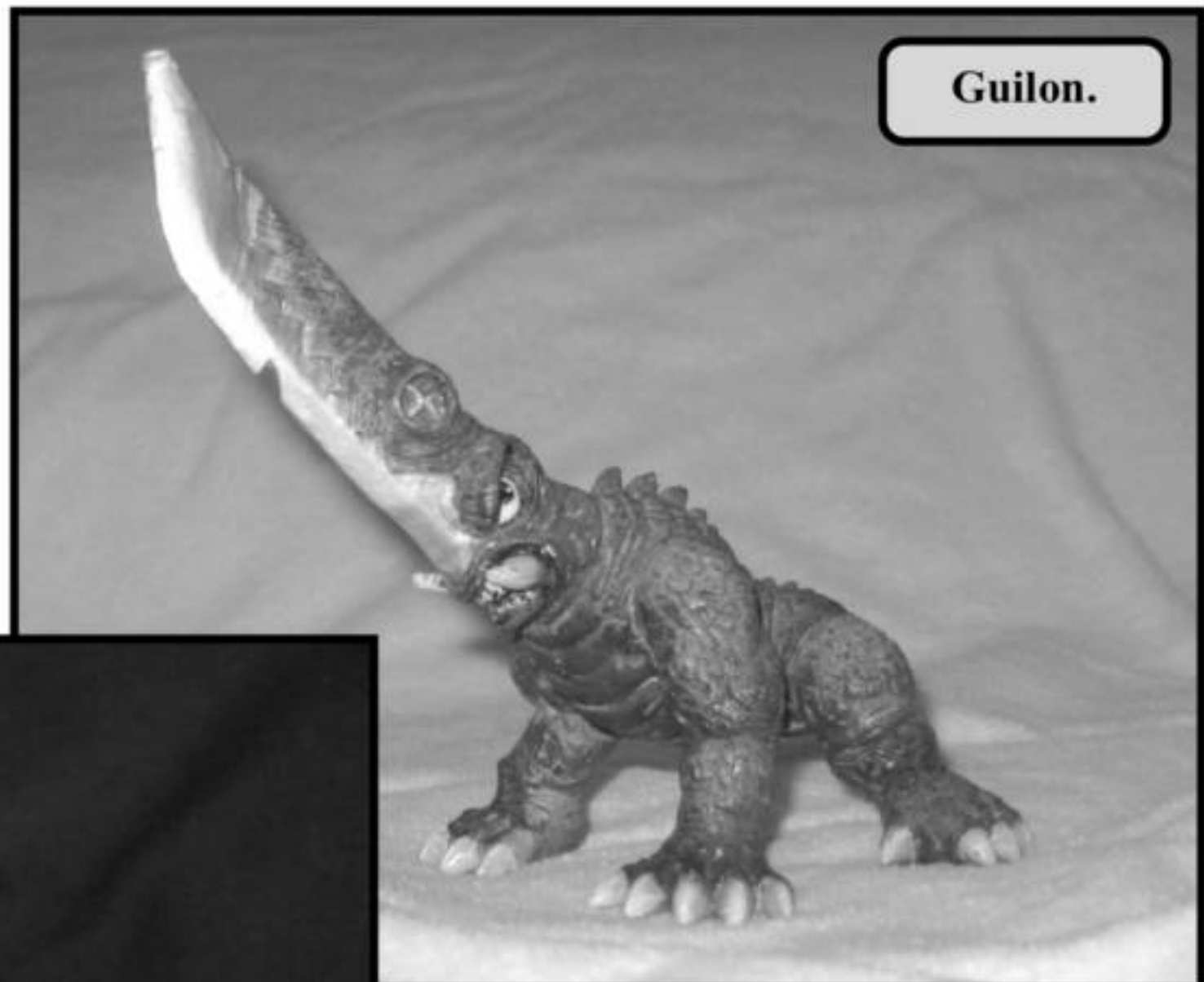
I do have some Gamera prototypes in my collection, but I happened upon them by accident. They were offered to me, so I made the purchase. At that point in my collecting, I was open to acquiring more prototypes of other Trendmasters toy lines besides the unproduced *Osmosis Jones* and animated *Godzilla* line. And once I made that decision, it's like the flood gates

opened wide, and I began getting emails from a lot of contacts, with offers about other prototypes. It started to feel like Christmas every day for me. You do the long hours of research and look high and low for those very rare and few prototype figures, and then you get news that one of your contacts has said figure, and it's the grand pay off! It's what makes collecting fun for me, even though it has its fair share of frustrations. You also need to be very, very patient. Some of the pieces in my

collection were on my wish list for 7-9 years, so you can imagine how exciting it is to finally get ahold of them, considering there were typically only 12 or less of each prototype made of any particular figure in its developmental stages. The odds of finding these pieces are very slim. I was never a fan of Gamera, but when I got the prototypes, I did become more interested in him.

What I have of this line is a few test shot prototypes. I like them because they are pretty outrageous colors, unpainted plastic figures in bright yellows and green. I also have a few resin Paint Masters of Gyaos and Zigra, and an incomplete resin Guilon, with a missing leg and tail. It's a little bothersome because of all the Gamera figures, Guilon is my favorite. I also have a plastic Paint Master of Viras in all blue, which is completely different paint colors than the released figure, and I like this one much better. I

have three different Zigras in all: a first shot unpainted plastic figure in flesh color and blue plastic, another Paint Master plastic prototype in a metallic purple wash and gray color, similar to the Official Dealer Catalog image, and a resin Paint Master in silver with a blue wash.



Guilon.



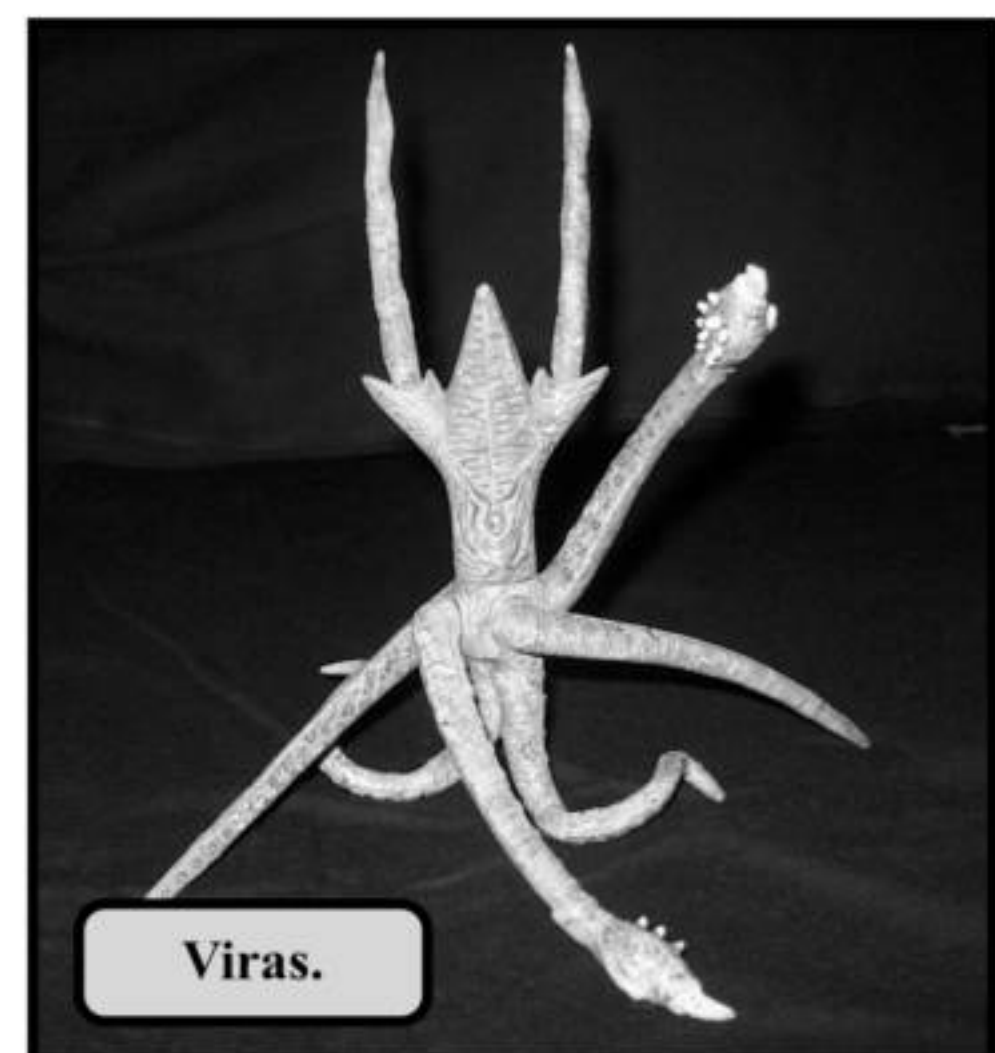
Zigra.



Gyaos.



Gamera.



Viras.

SM: Can you tell us a little about Trendmasters' *HallowScream* line, as well as the unproduced *I.M. Weird* figures?

JS: I'm pretty sure Trendmasters started their *HallowScream* toy line around 1997, as these toys do appear in the 1998 and 1999 Official Dealer Catalogs. Although, if I'm not mistaken, I believe they had begun working on some of their light-up pumpkins much earlier in the company's beginning. They became very successful with them, which eventually led to the *HallowScream* line coming into existence as one of their seasonal toy lines, along with their Christmas line as well. They definitely made some pretty cool items, and as of today, I am still finding out more and more about some of these fantastic Halloween inspired toys. Considering I mainly only collect the Trendmasters prototypes, I did step out of my norm and purchase a number of the retail releases from the *HallowScream* line. I do own only one prototype from this line and I'm pretty sure it was unreleased. It's a 'Haunted Candelabra' and is unpainted. It looks like a giant candle with a tiny bulb on it and sits on a base that has some skulls, bones and a pumpkin face. It also has a monster hand on each corner holding a crystal ball. What's pretty freaky about it is, it does work, and since the candle part is made of some type of rubber, when you turn it on, it sounds like a creepy record played backwards, and the entire candle takes on some weird movements, twisting around! I quite like it!

This *HallowScream* line pretty much focused on everything Halloween – and I do like how they changed the name to *HallowScream*! Gives it a little more life, doesn't it? They made a bunch of different items, figures, candelabras and pumpkins. They had Halloween decorative candelabras with electric lights featuring Halloween-themed motifs, but I think their biggest success with this seasonal toy line was their Halloween decorative Blow Mold Pumpkins that lit up! These were really wicked. I have five different types of these Blow Mold Pumpkins in my collection, and considering they

are now 14-16 years old, they still work and fit in perfectly with today's Halloween decorations. They made a different colored series of these pumpkins which they called 'Mardi Gras Pumpkins' and came in white, green, fuchsia, purple, blue – even black. I have the green one and it's fantastic. It gives off a nice blue hue when it's lit up and it has a spooky face.

They made another line of what was called the 'Pumpkin Geezer Assortment' which were basically wrinkle faced pumpkins. Three of these pumpkin 'Geezers' were made; the Official Dealer Catalog says they are "Glowing with old fashioned pumpkin pride! Wrinkled and worn, they brighten the night with their



spooky scowls!" The one that I own does look incredible when lit up. One of my favorites is a giant pumpkin called the 'Animated Fat Jack'. It's a big ugly looking pumpkin with lots of warts on it, with a scary face made of some rubbery texture, so it's squishable as well as electronic. It has disgusting details with a built-in sensor and, when you approach, it moves up & down and talks, saying "HAPPY HALLOWEEEN..." It's very effective and a brilliant toy. They also made a set of four really

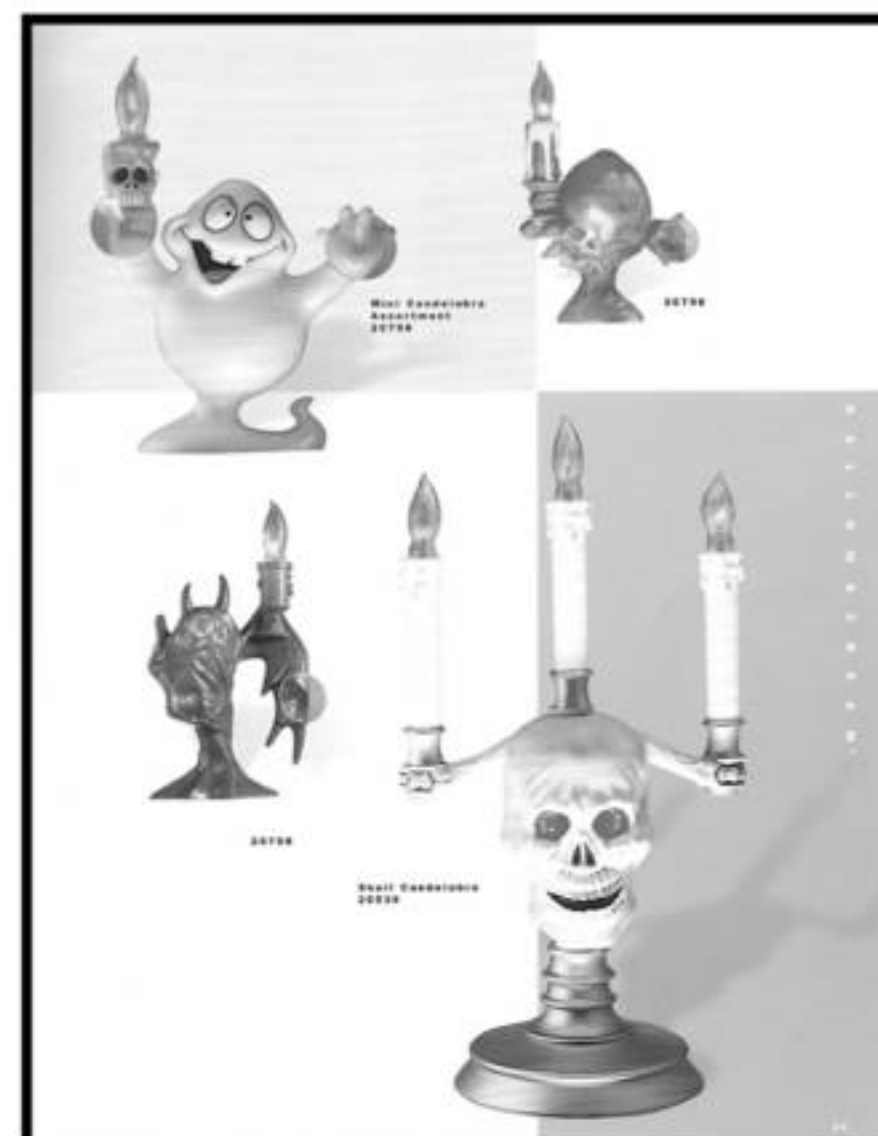
nice looking, mini light-up candelabras including a ghost, bat, spider and pumpkin head. These are some of my favorites from this line too, because of their compact size. TM made some really, really big Pumpkin Totems too, roughly 48"

tall, and the one I did consider purchasing was incredible, but I think just a little too big for my collection. But hey, it was nice to look at, and I kept a bunch of photos of it.

Trendmasters also did a few *Tales From the Crypt* items with the Crypt Keeper in an electric chair that would light-



HallowScream Mardi Gras Pumpkins.



up and shake while making spooky sounds. They even did a funky Frankenstein Monster strapped to his table, that lit up and said, "Have a Happy Halloween!", or something close to that. I caved and bought one of those too. They also made some skull-head candelabra and a neat flying animated witch that appears to be floating while she's stirring something in her cauldron as it lights up, and says some spooky stuff, ending with a high pitch laugh! There was another one similar to this, but made with Casper the Ghost and it too lights up, and has Casper stirring up something as well in his pumpkin pot. These items are definitely harder to find these days, especially the witch, but it's amazing what turns up on eBay once Halloween approaches. All of these items are very creative, and filled with character, which is why I collect them.



the shelves because of the licensing issue. Anyways, I was lucky I picked up a brand new set of both busts. There was a giant *Casper the Ghost* line of light-up Pumpkin Heads, as well as the Mummy, Frankenstein, & Dracula light-up monster heads Trendmasters did which I also own, although it's not part of the *Universal Monsters* series. Honestly, there were so many different blow mold light-up items from this line, that even I have trouble following all of them! There were team-ups with Disney as well and a series of Donald Duck and Mickey light-up Blow Mold Pumpkins, and quite a few M&M Blow Molds too.

As for the awesome unproduced toy line, *I.M. Weird*, this is a completely different story. I believe there were only two figures from this unreleased line prototyped, and I am happy to say I own them both in resin. There was a Robot and a two-headed Frankenstein Monster made, and from what I learned about this line, it's yet another shame it never saw the light of day. Frankenstein was given two heads because the designer thought it would look cool and would allow for a larger torso. I wondered if that had something to do with the *Universal Monsters* license, but apparently not. It was inspired by the Universal Frankenstein, of course, but it was just a point of departure.

I'm not sure why the *I.M. Weird* line was never released. The prototypes in my collection are both fully painted. From my knowledge, I own the only known painted versions

Trendmasters did a brief team-up with the *Universal Monsters* line, and made some Frankenstein and Dracula light-up busts. These didn't last very long, but I think that had something to do with the license. There was also an unreleased Mummy bust that was part of this line, but never made it to retail. I had heard they were available for a limited time at Walmart and Target back then, but I'm pretty sure I had heard they were taken off



Trendmasters' two-headed Frankenstein Monster from the unreleased *I.M. Weird* toy line.

of these two monsters, as well as having another complete Robot unpainted in it's earliest form of development.

These unproduced figures were supposed to be a "Build Your Own Monster" kit, similar to

the classic *Creepy Crawlers* from the 1970's where you could mold parts and put them on an ABS torso. There was also supposed to be little brains and hearts for them as well, though they did not make it to the sculpting stage. You



would then be able to “mix & match” the limbs, hearts and brains of the other figures. The thing about these figures is they were intended to be molded by the consumer, (a la *Creeper Crawlers*), so they would just be the color of the plastic material that was provided in the kit. As a result, the main torso (made in two-piece ABS to trap the arms, legs, and head) was kept pretty simple on most of this stuff. There are some additional “mystery pieces” for the Robot I have, that are actually his innards (I think), which include a mechanical heart, brain, etc... The plan was to make the head mold set up so that it had a little cavity with a slit in it where you could put brains inside the head. And the torsos were made to be hollow, so there’s a place (theoretically) to put in a heart, and mechanical “hearts”, “brains” and “guts” for the robots – and organic ones for the monsters were supposed to have been created as well. It’s bizarre when you think about it, but also very clever. Reminds me of the toys from my youth, way back in the ‘70s – and yes, if you must know, I am a tad bit nostalgic! Since my prototypes from this line are painted, and in resin, there is nothing bendable or interchangeable. Mine would most likely have been Toy Fair Paint Masters, although very little information is known about this toy line, other than what I just mentioned, even from the designer himself.

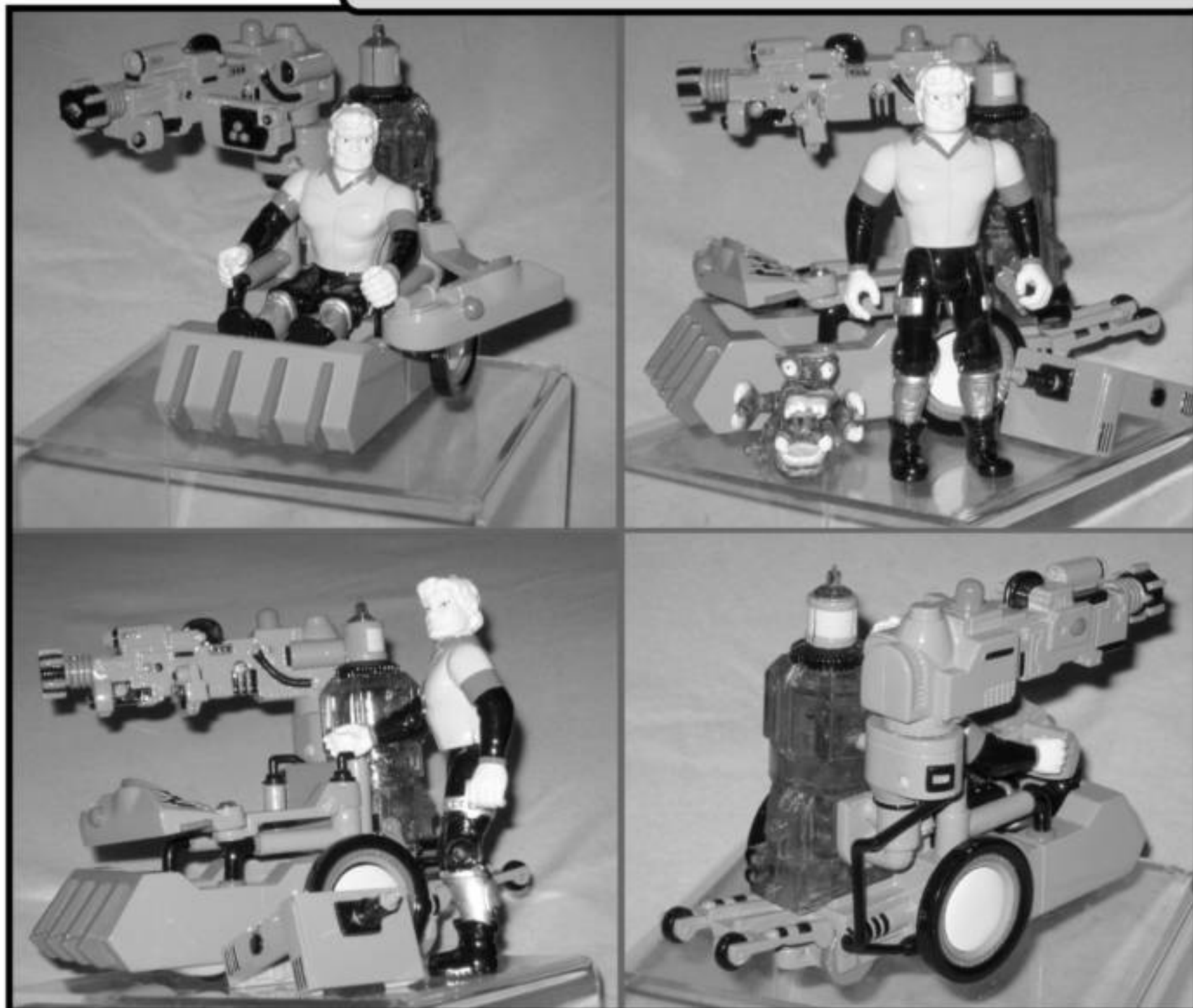
SM: What were your thoughts on some of Trendmasters *Extreme Ghostbusters*, *Mars Attacks* and *Lost in Space* figures?

JS: It’s interesting that you ask me about all three of these lines at the same time because I was never really much a fan of any of these lines, until I started picking up some of their prototypes. But to be honest, they were not at the top of my list, mainly because the *Mars Attacks* movie was not a big ticket item for me and I only ever saw bits and pieces of the *Lost in Space* (LIS) 1998 movie, as well as the *Extreme Ghostbusters* (EGB)

cartoon. My collection of all three of these lines TM did began with my original and unique, one-of-a-kind EGB Garrett Miller unreleased resin Paint Master Sample prototype. I think after that, I started getting emails and phone calls about the *Mars Attacks* prototypes along with some LIS pieces. But the Garrett Miller is definitely one of my stand-out pieces.

This prototype is special, because I know Garrett Miller was apparently the favorite character from that show, so many of the fans were very disappointed that no figure was ever made of him to fit with Kylie, Roland, Eduardo and Egon. It turns out that there actually was such a figure, and only as a prototype in resin. From what I read online shortly thereafter, it seemed to stir up a fair bit of interest. I did some research, checked with my contacts and even spoke with the product manager of the EGB line to ask him what he knew about this figure and why it was never released. He had told me that Russell Hornsby really didn’t like how this figure turned out. It has Garrett Miller with light blonde hair, in a yellow shirt with a thick red stripe, black pants and a light purple wheelchair, with red highlights and a massive missile-launcher attached to a really big translucent red chamber, which I presume would have been to hold the ghosts the EGB caught. Anyways, I myself was impressed with it right away, and it appears to look pretty much like Garrett from the cartoon, although the hair on the prototype is a light blonde/yellow, and his hair on the show was brown. From what I had heard, Russell really didn’t care to match things identical to what the figures were originally based on, and this was the case for all their lines, apparently, not just the EGB series. I think he had enjoyed stretching out the imagination process a little bit

Extreme Ghostbusters Garrett Miller prototype.



more, with his creative art team given leeway to push the design specifics, and it became a bit like a signature to change things up about these characters in their figurative form.

So from what I was told, for this Garrett Miller prototype, he apparently just didn't like it. "Hated" was actually the word I was told. Perhaps that's a bit too drastic, but if he was the big boss, he had the final say. So if he's not happy, it was just scrapped. He had felt the purple wheelchair color was too feminine for Garrett's character, but to be honest, I have to say, I quite love the colors on it. It stands out, and adds character. There it is again for me. Now keep in mind, since it was most likely used as a Toy Fair Paint Master Sample from '96-'97, the colors originally chosen for the prototype are usually never what the final retail figure ends up looking like. I think there are pros and cons to this because the prototypes are always done with such wicked hand painted precision; they stand out for me every time. Once the figures hit the production line, I think the paint jobs just get a little sloppier.

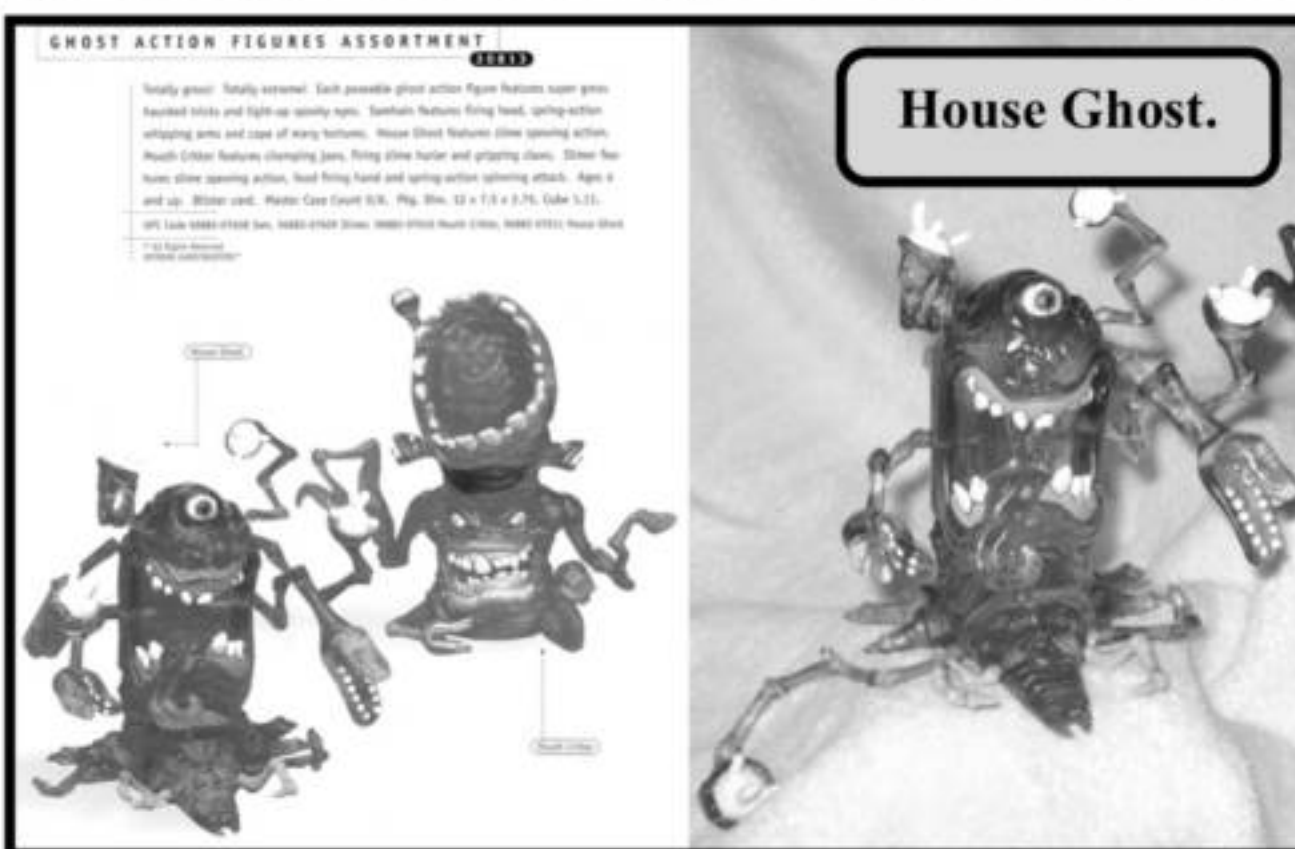
I know people wondered why Garrett was in such a pumped-up looking wheelchair, and it was even considered one of the "strangest toy subjects" by the Trendmasters design team, but I do believe it was slated to fit in with the 'Deluxe' line of *EGB* figures. Now, having this piece in my collection, I will also add that there was also rumor of this toy being unable to fit into the back of the Ecto-1 Cruiser – and that I can confirm is true. Though the resin prototypes are always slightly larger than the production pieces, even if this did make it to the plastic stage, I highly doubt it would fit in the car either. So that part was definitely true. There was also some speculation about 'political correctness' with Garrett being in a wheelchair, but I cannot confirm any of that. I did have some people write me asking if the Garrett figure could stand. I had to laugh at that, simply because as a figure that is removable from the wheelchair, why wouldn't he be able to stand, you know?

I also own a few other resin *EGB* Paint Masters, including the Sam Hain figure, which is the same one used in the 1997 Dealer Catalog, along with the resin House Ghost Paint Master, and a slightly different colored Mouth Critter resin prototype. Sam Hain is a

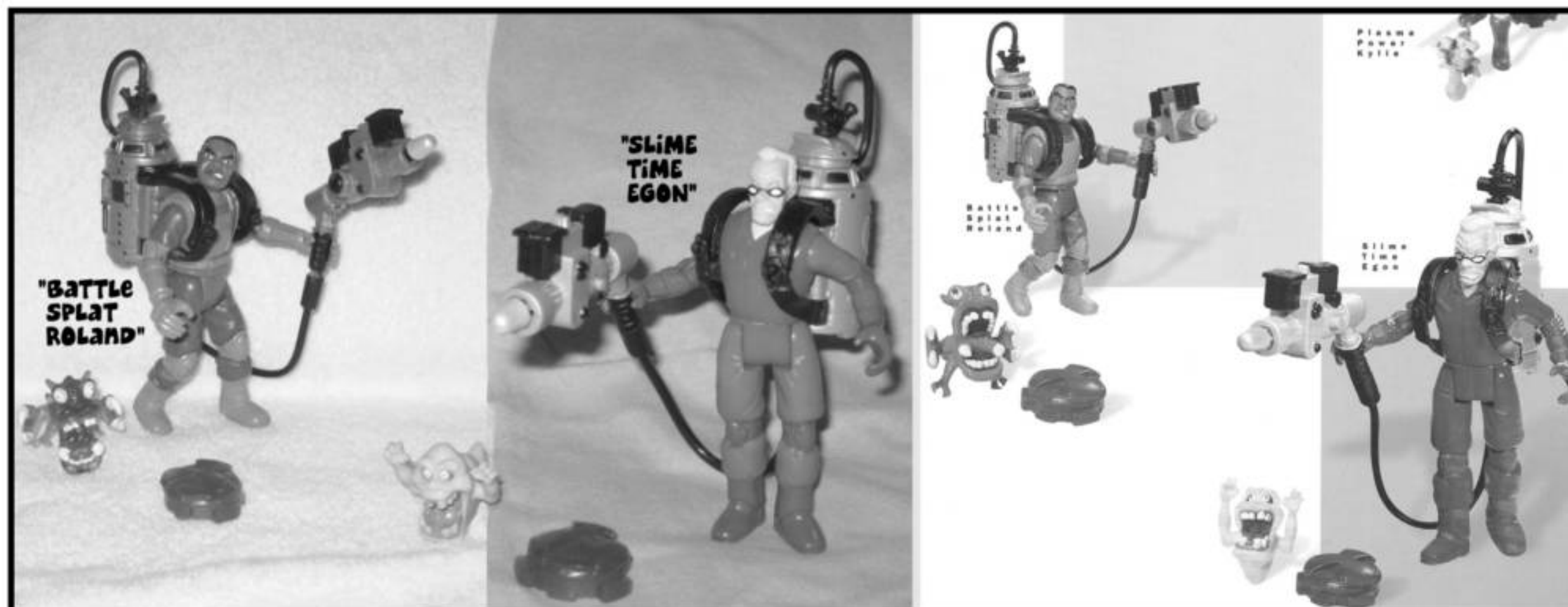


Sam Hain.

nice little figure, but very fragile and has had to be glued in place a couple of times, which can become a difficult task, holding the arms in place. My translucent green House Ghost has a couple of broken off tentacle/



House Ghost.



arms, but since that one is very dense and fragile I leave it alone for fear of any more damage happening to it. The Mouth Critter prototype is also very fragile so I prefer to not even handle it. I have a different House Ghost prototype too, and it is in the rare purple colors, as opposed to both my resin Paint Master and the released green version. Not exactly sure why, but in the 1998 Official Dealer Catalog, Trendmasters went ahead and reversed the colors of these two figures and that always puzzled me, until I received my purple House Ghost, which appears to be the same one shown in the catalog (although mine is missing a couple of pieces to it). Still, because it's in the non-production colors, and was used in the catalog photo shoot, I'm fortunate to have it in my collection. I also have some repaints of the released figures of Roland and Egon. In the 1998 Official Dealer Catalog, there are some photos of Egon & Roland in different non-production colors. There's the "Battle Splat Roland" in a green outfit and a "Slime Time Egon" in a red outfit. I think these may have been the original names chosen for them but were later changed along with the colors for their outfits. But once again, mine were used as Paint Masters.

For the other *EGB* figures, they're just OK in my book, but what I really do like are both the unreleased (actually UK-only released) "Ghost-Bustin' Bike" with Eduardo and the "Ghost-Grabbin' Copter" with Roland. Those pieces are cool! I own both the production figures and the original resin Paint Master prototypes that were the very same figures used for the boxed artwork they were to come in. And that, for me, makes these figures very special. They were hard enough to find in the United Kingdom as is, so to have them both as the original prototypes and retail figures is a very rare coincidence.



Ghost-Grabbin' Copter with Roland.

There were several other TM figures from different toy lines that were never released in North America, one of them which I own is the "Deluxe Kibosh" ghost, from the *Casper the Ghost: A Spirited Beginning* film. And he just looks like an over-inflated puffy Slimer on steroids, but I love him! I picked up a couple of these figures from Japan, and also have an in-house prototype as well, but it looks just like the retail figure. I think it was James Earl Jones who voiced this figure in the Casper movie, but I spoke to the Trendmasters employee who provided his story about using his own laugh for this figure when you push the button on his chest, which also triggers his eyes to light-up. I heard that



there was just not enough interest in these figures, so they were only released in the UK and some in Asia as well. It's a little hard to imagine that there was no interest in the *EGB* Bike & Copter, because they would have added a nice touch to the Ecto-1, considering that was the only real vehicle for this line, even though for the Kenner *Real Ghostbusters* toy line, there were several of the other vehicles released.

Tim Burton's films are hit and miss for me. I could

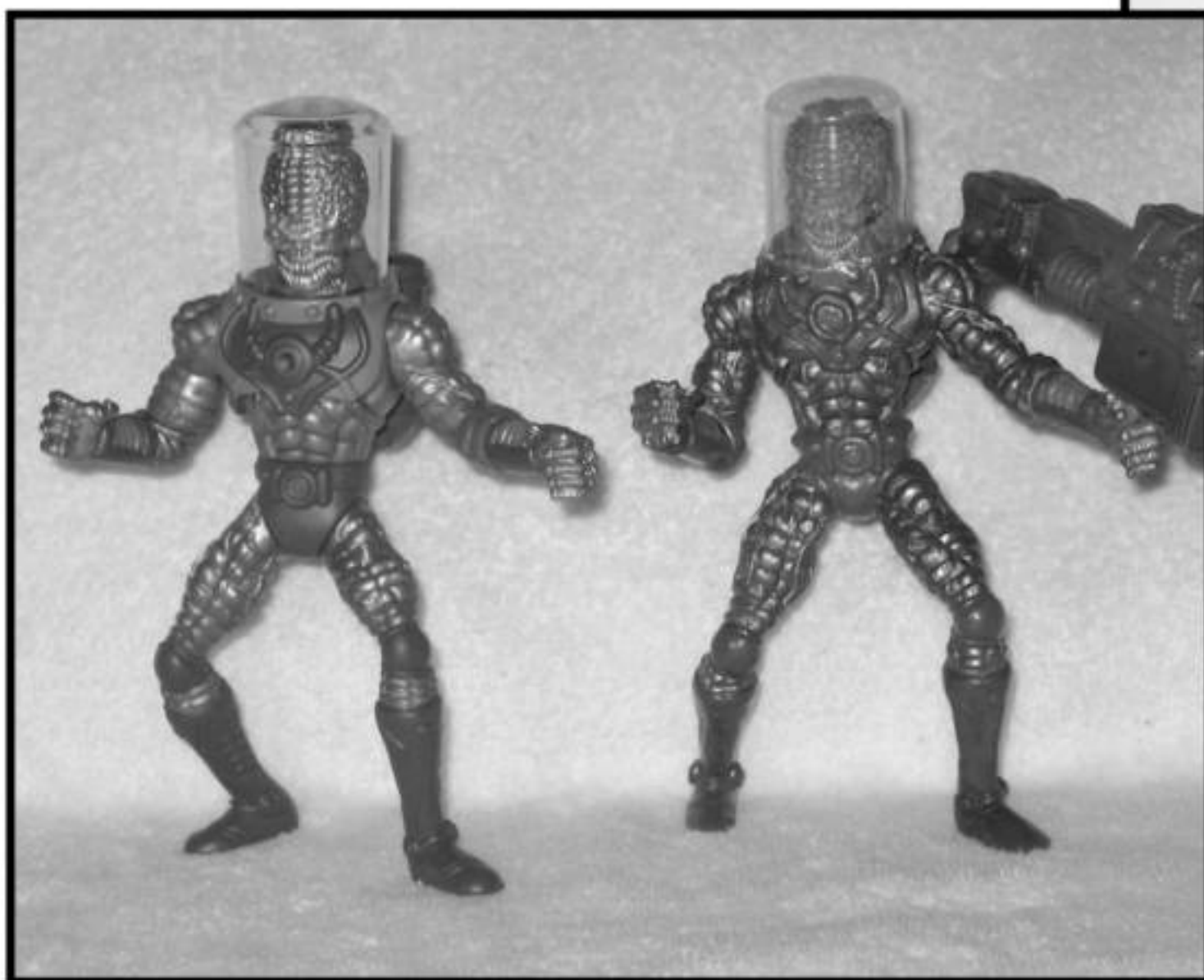


Ghost-Bustin' Bike with Eduardo.

appreciate all the big stars in *Mars Attacks* and the humor but it was just OK...so, this toy line was not much of a priority, but I do own a couple of the Trendmasters prototypes. I have an unpainted Flying Saucer in white plastic with a red battery pack cover and the so-called



'sound activation button' is in red plastic as well. I also have a resin Martian Trooper, which is very similar to the production piece, but maybe a half centimeter larger. It also has a purple brain head as opposed to the metallic blue/green color of the retail figure. The body paint scheme on the resin is a more silver/blue tone. But the rarest piece I have on this line is my Martian unpainted resin head prototype. It's unique, because it was re-cast at TM from the original maquette that was received from the Warner Brothers special F/X department. It was used by the sculptors at Trendmasters as the direct reference for their toy figures, in particular the 11" figure.



The *Lost in Space* movie line was more at the bottom of my list. The 'space' themed toys were not as big for me as the monster figures. But, like the *Mars Attacks* line, I do have a couple of different prototypes. I have the Paint Master prototype of the Battle Damaged Robot, which is plastic not resin, and is the



same one that appeared in the Official Dealer Catalog from 1998. There are some slight color variations on part of this prototype, even though it looks pretty much like the released version. Probably the funkiest thing about my prototype is it has the wrong sound chip in it, and this was done on purpose! It actually features one of the evil uncle's laughs on it from the *Casper the Ghost* line! And when I spoke to the production

manager about this, he in fact told me this was done intentionally. I guess it was some kind of an in-house joke. I also have a unique Will Robinson prototype figure in a mock up unpainted package with an all white card. I think that's kind of neat. Things like this are almost of more interest than the figures themselves, because I do believe the prototype packaging is very rare to find. The figure is a little different then the retail release, but it's the all white carded package that is the stand out feature about this particular piece. I was also offered the rarest known prototype figure from this line, but I had to decline because of the price point. It was the only known complete, hand painted resin prototype of Penny, from the *LIS* movie. I have seen another one just like it, although unpainted and missing a leg, but the fully painted one was quite nice, I must say. Not exactly sure why the figure of Penny was scrapped, so that will be another mystery unsolved, but I'm sure they had their reasons...



SM: Prior to Trendmasters closing their doors in 2002, do you know if they had any other toylines planned that went unproduced?

JS: Well, this is a good question, as there were actually quite a number of toys that were planned but ended up cancelled for whatever reason. And as I go through the titles now, I am rather shocked how many there really were, and these are just the ones that I am aware of...no doubt there was definitely more. I'll just list them off, and mention a few that I know of: *Godzilla Animated Plush Assortment*, *Godzilla Doom Island*, *Godzilla the Series*, *King Kong* (was shown in the 1995 catalog), *Voltron* (Dracotron and the Robeasts), *I.M. Weird*, *Osmosis Jones*, *SPY Kids*, *Maggie & The Ferocious Beast*, *Rumble Gladiators* (a spin off from the *Rumble Robots* line), *The Mummy*, *Species*, *The Outer Limits*, *Sinbad*, *Donkey Kong Country*, *Beast Balls*, C-Games and some C-Watches (C-Games included five different

titles with only five made of each, such as *Slap that Chicken*, *Mole Mash*, *Kickin' & Fishin'*, *Kickin' & Huntin'*, and *Sgt. Simon*). Some of the unreleased C-Watches included: *Iron Man*, *Batman Beyond*, *Shadow Raiders*, *The Iron Giant*, *The Munsters*, and after Trendmasters collaborated with the company Innovative Time, they had planned C-Watches for *Chicken Run* and *The Rugrats*, to name a couple.

Well, that appears to be at least 18 titles that I'm aware of. The *Godzilla Animated Plush Assortment* was very cool. They had planned these back in 1995, although I believe they were made before that, going back possibly to even 1993. There were three of them in the set and they went through a few vendors before arriving as the figures I have. The first ones all had hand drawn scales and kind of looked like something from *Where the Wild Things Are*. They then went through quite a few materials and eventually ended up in the final plush version. They had planned to make Godzilla, Rodan and Ghidorah; they worked like a lot of popular plush items at the time and had blinking eyes, sound (their classic roars), and a mechanism (activated with the motion sensor in their chest) that made them shake. It's a safe bet only 12 each of these things exist in some form or another. I own all of three figures from this line of plushies, and am also very fortunate to have two different Ghidorahs, including the same one that appeared in the Official 1995 Dealer Catalog, and another slightly smaller one. I have an interesting

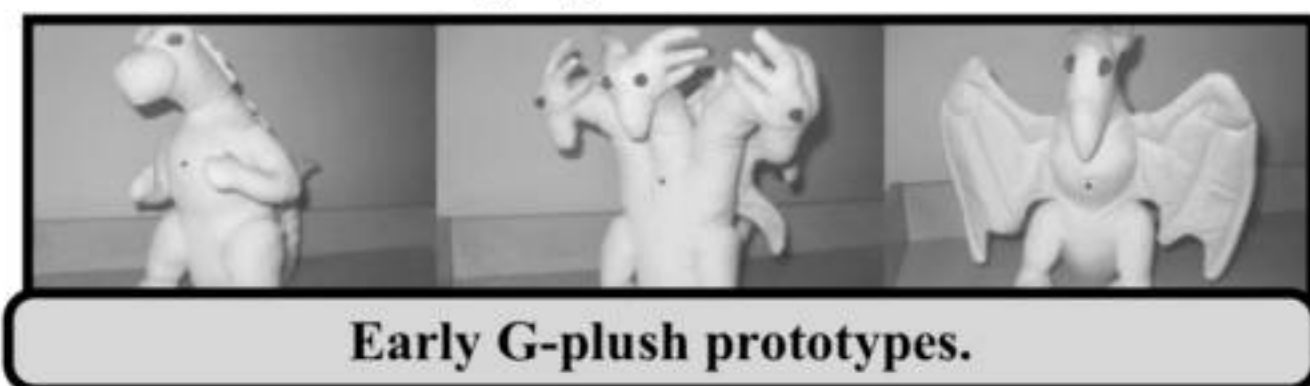


story about these plush figures; one of the ex-TM employees had told me that he and two other ex-employees were sent to a Chicago G-Con (which I think was back in 1995), to present these prototypes as a way to generate some interest among the Godzilla fanatics. Well, it definitely worked because the crowds went wild for them, actually begging to have them released – they even went so far as to start a petition demanding





which was relayed to me, straight from the source. I just never heard what the real reason was why they pulled the plug on this line, because I honestly believe they would have been very big sellers.



Early G-plush prototypes.

Also in the 1995 Dealer Catalog are a few photos showing a planned *King Kong* line, which included a large and very nice playset of 'King Kong Monster Mountain', showing Kong busting out of the top of the mountain, surrounded by a bunch of army figures and tanks. It reminds me of the *Godzilla Attacks New York Playset*. There's no way of knowing what ever came of that, but it does appear as if some prototypes were made. Whether they still exist today is beyond me,



but I certainly wouldn't mind this one with the mountain.

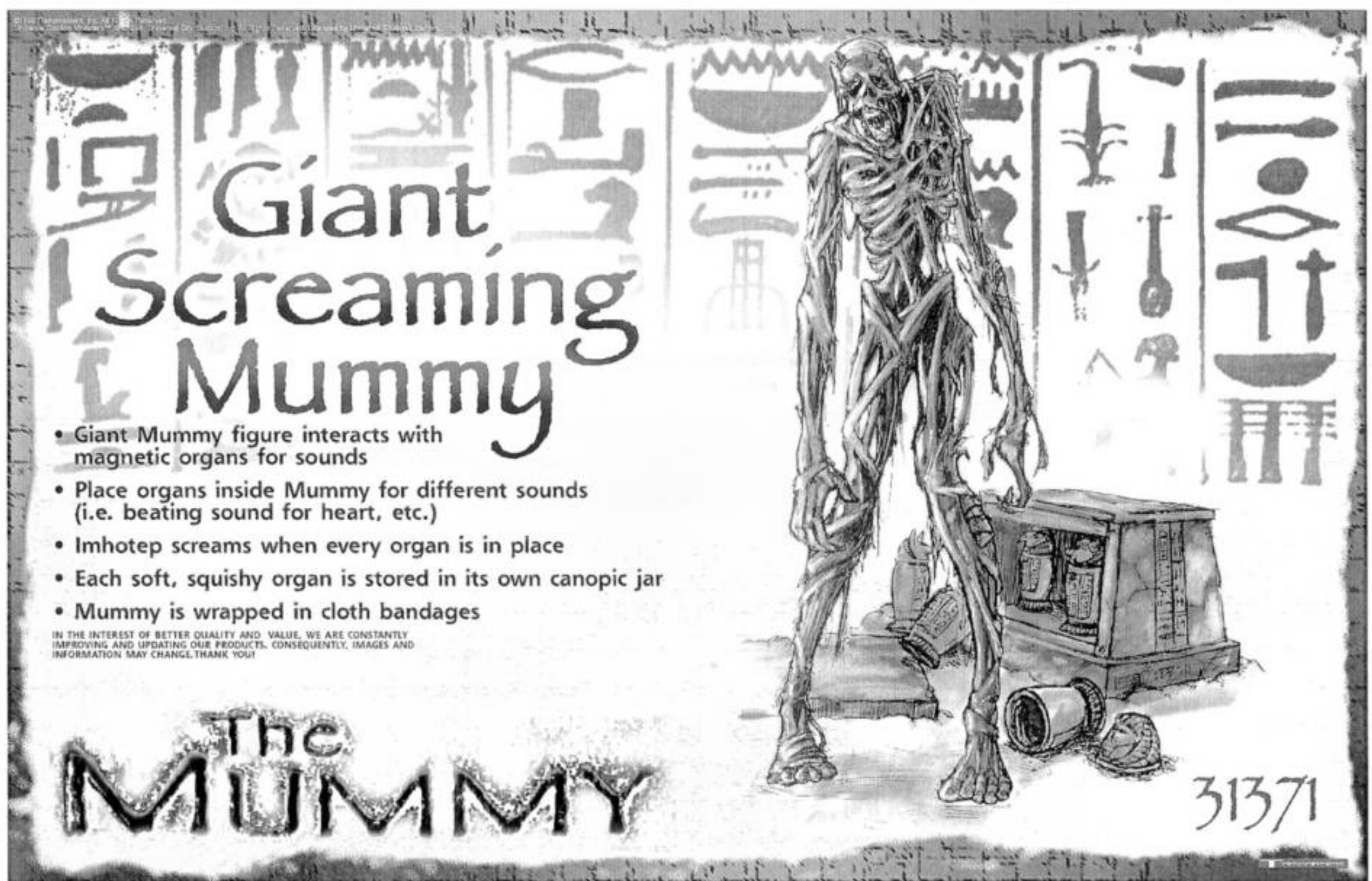
For the fans of Voltron, I think the *Stealth Voltron* was technically unreleased as well, but I can't say for sure, as I do see those on eBay pretty regularly, but one of the ex-Trendmasters

Trendmasters had originally planned for a King Kong toy line, as seen in their 1995 Dealer Catalog.

employees seemed to think they never hit store shelves. TM had planned a villainous robot, 'Dracotron' (which was to be made up of five dinosaur Robeasts that formed together). One of the designers of this figure told me he had worked on some of the weapons of this robot as well as Hunk, Allura and Pidge. He mentioned he was stuck working on the Voltron ABS for a long while because they were more complex than others and required a lot of explaining to the Hong Kong department, as to what they wanted. I had a chuckle listening to him explain it to me, because he said the first one was fun and then by his third and fourth Voltron, he had grown tired of working on it. Apparently, the rights to Voltron were owned by a guy in St. Louis that ran Channel 11 there named Ted Koplar, I believe. That's pretty much how Trendmasters gained the rights to do Voltron. I was told how he remembered getting the faxes at one point describing how hard it was to get the original tooling for the larger metal figure as they were owned by a friend's friend of some friend's friend! The ABS he did for Dracotron had all the dino pieces in Voltron colors, but if you do some searching online, you will find some photos of them all chromed up. As a matter of fact, I had some parts to one of these Dracotron Robeasts, a tail and some of the missiles, all hand painted in chrome. I gave them up to a big Voltron fan who was asking for my help to locate these figures, as Dracotron is apparently the most difficult unreleased Voltron prototype of Trendmasters to locate.

Another line was the unreleased *Rumble Gladiators*, which was an extension of the IR Controlled *Rumble Robots* and *Rumble Wars* series. There was just one complete set of three different hard-wired prototypes for this *Rumble Gladiators* line. They were Gladiators that had no legs, but their torsos were attached to their chariots, all decked out in the usual Gladiator armor. Their names were Brutus, Phobus and Orcus – and this set was complete with weapons, helmets, and other accessories, all fully painted. I've seen photos of them and they were very cool looking. The three *Rumble Gladiators* were to come with four to five accessory weapons, a removable shield, removable helmet, and stand for the chariot. There were medallions on the front of the chariots which were made removable as well. Trendmasters was going to make a whole slew of different medallions (they designed a couple dozen, apparently). The figures underneath their armor had a generic statue/mannequin look with metallic skin (blue/silver and gold/brass tones). They were made this way, not to look human because they didn't have legs, and it was felt they might be a bit disconcerting to have a torso stuck in a chariot. These *Rumble Gladiators* followed the same principle of the other *Rumble* figures, where they would battle each other via remote control. I was offered one of these from the person who designed this line and he has the only existing set of these, so I do hope to have one of these in my collection shortly.

As for the unreleased *SPY Kids* and *Mummy* lines, I believe Trendmasters just up and lost the licensing. It's actually quite possible that Trendmasters only made a pitch for *The*



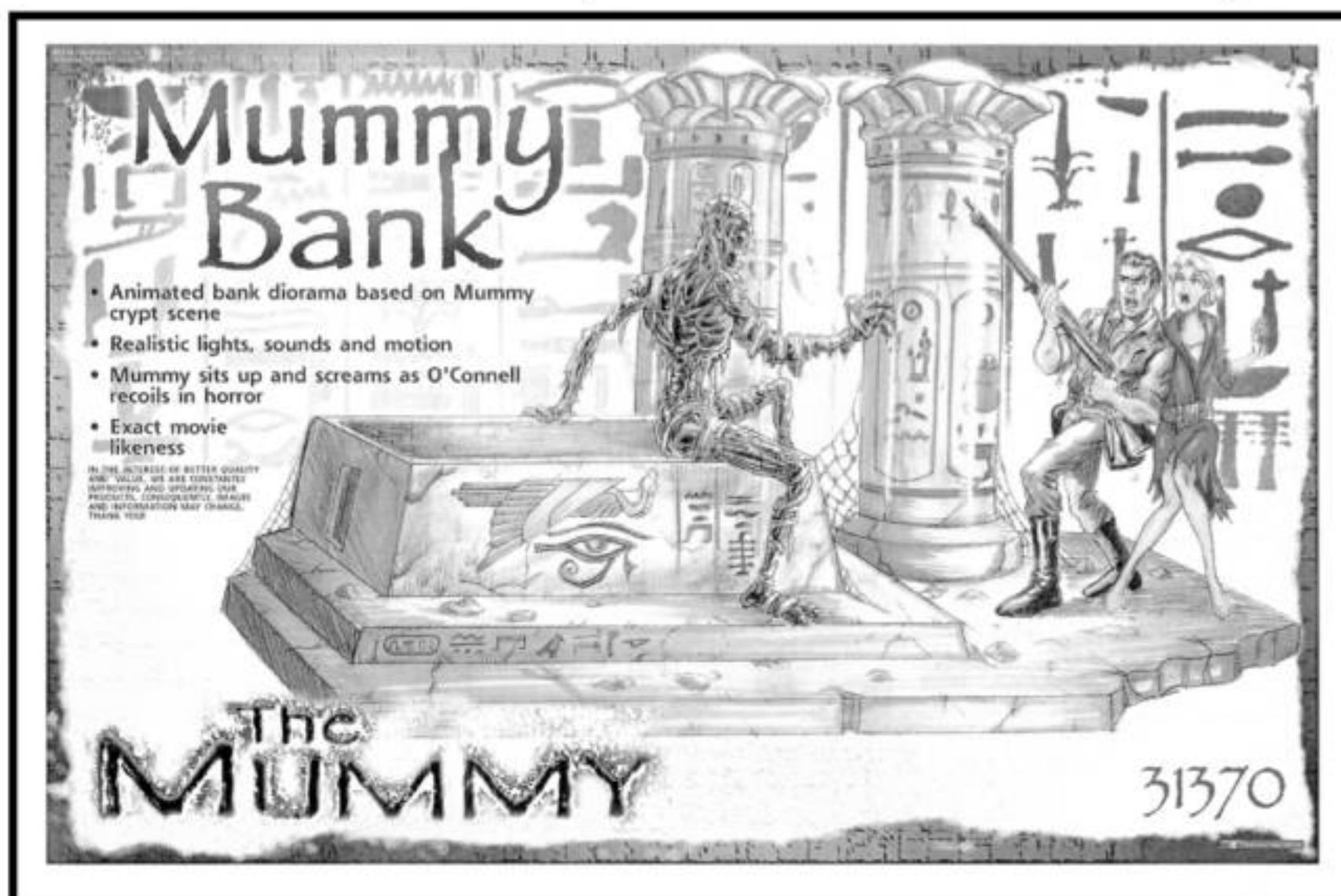
Mummy line, because I thought I had heard it ended up being too big, or some other problem arose with the license. Again, just some speculation on my part here. I can't confirm anything. What I do have on *The Mummy* appears in the big Trendmasters Product Review Guide, which is dated April 13th and 14th, 1999. It has print-outs on the toy lines for 1999, but no pictures of the toys themselves, just some drawings and specifics. It's kind of hard to explain actually, as each item has a feature sheet for that product with item number, features, and then there's a spreadsheet showing retail cost for everything. And the biggest looking toy line featured in this binder is for *The Mummy*! There was a ton of

figures that were planned according to what appears in this binder.

With the *SPY Kids* unreleased line my main disappointment was that there wasn't really much in the way of actual action figures. They had some 'Super Spy Gadget' stuff, like a lunch box with hidden compartment and these little scarab beetle lights and maps. I have one of those and a very cool hidden camera disguised as juice box. I'm not sure if the camera part on my prototype actually works, but these are the things we can never be sure of, if we own the prototypes. Since they are a work-in-progress, one is lucky to have it in whatever state of development it's in, so I certainly won't complain. They

also had some Walkie-Talkie Sunglasses, Spy Gear Wallet Set, and lastly some Bendable Figure Assortment featuring Floop, Donnamite, Long Arms, Thumb Thumb and Ninja Thumb. I have a complete set of these as well. They're hand painted, so I don't 'bend' them, for fear of mucking up the paint job.

I honestly don't know anything about the *Maggie and the Ferocious Beast* line, but I became aware of these figures because they appeared in the Official 2001 Dealer Catalog. As for *Species*, *The Outer Limits* and *Sinbad*, I saw photos of some prototype packaging and only one figure of an unpainted Sinbad prototype, in one of those Action Figure Digests. But I do have a fold-out flyer which is three pages double sided, that mentions these lines as "Coming



Soon", but no other mention of them in any other Trendmasters documents that I have.

Donkey Kong Country, based on the video game, does appear in one of the Official Dealer Catalogs, so I can see the small figures they made and, upon Googling this line, I did find some more photos of the Toy Fair Paint Master Samples, but again, not sure why they line never hit the shelves either.

Lastly, we have Beast Balls. Again, I'm not sure why these were cancelled, as they did appear at the 1999 Toy Fair show and a number of prototypes were made, along with some in carded packages. These were a pretty bizarre set of crazy looking figures, made up to look like monstrous footballs, baseballs, basketballs, basically anything with a ball! I seriously think this line was influenced by those classic 'Mad Balls' toys. I do have a resin 6" figure of one of these characters, and mine is one with a basketball head. For a smaller figure, it's very

dense, heavy as hell, and made of solid resin and actually wider than it is tall and bulky. It's missing a finger on the left hand – a real freaky monstrosity, but hey, I like it. The person that designed it told me when he finally got a look at how the figure turned out he really didn't like it, saying it didn't properly represent his sketch that the toy was based on. Maybe they went a little too crazy on the spaghetti like veins, who knows?

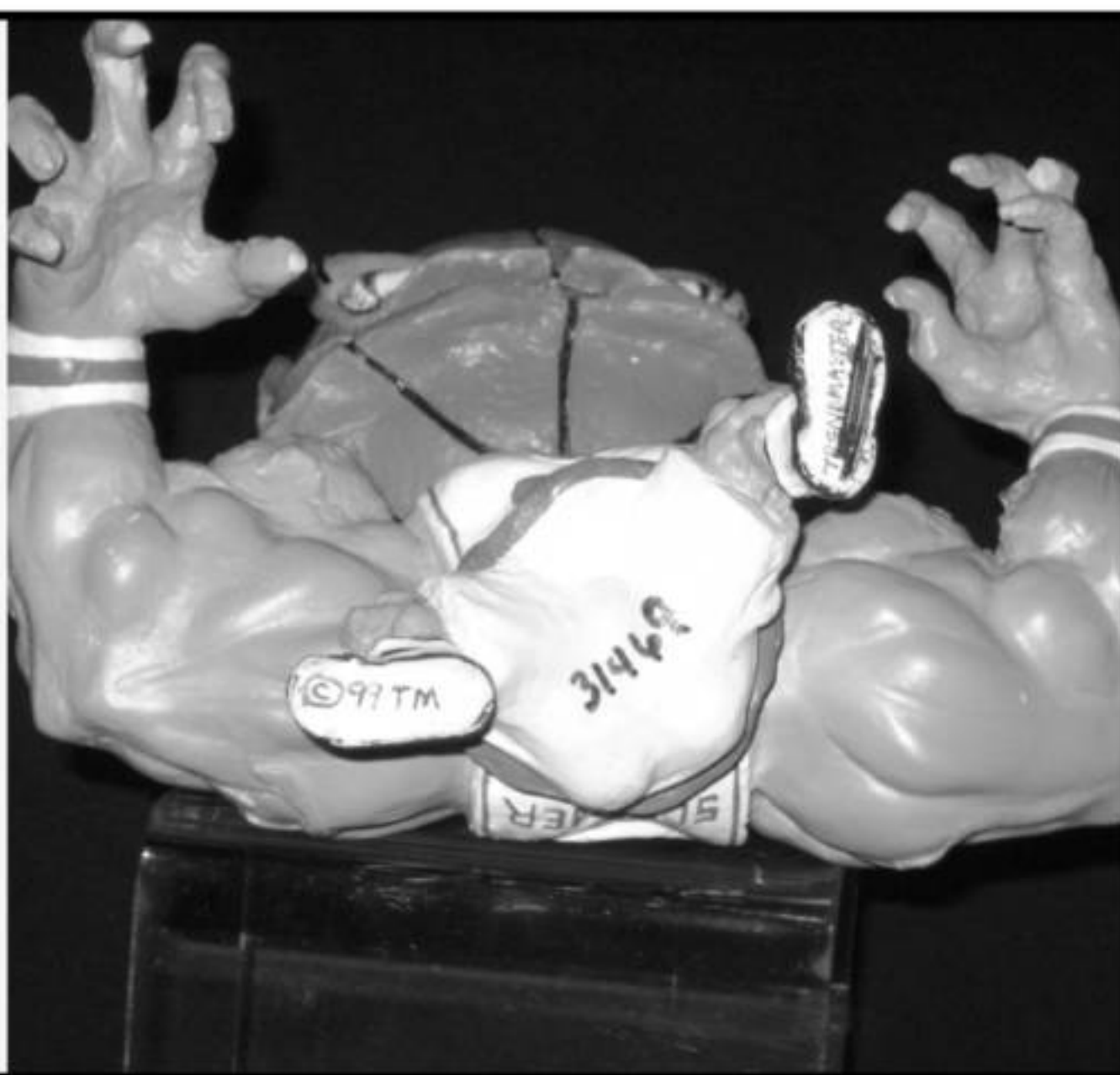
SM: Out of your vast Trendmasters collection, do you have any particular favorites?

JS: Good question...the *Osmosis Jones* and *Godzilla the Series* unreleased toy lines would be my absolute favorites for sure. And I have even imagined the worst case scenario, by asking myself the ultimate torturous question...If there was some form of a natural disaster in the midst, like a hurricane or tornado and I knew all my toys would be destroyed if I could only keep, let's say two of my favorite prototypes, due to said disaster, it would definitely be the 10" Deluxe Drix figure from *Osmosis Jones* and the 10" Cyber-Godzilla Mega Monster from *Godzilla the Series*. And ironically enough, these were among the very first Trendmasters prototypes I ever purchased, kick starting my all-out collecting craze, so in that sense, they are very dear to me. And yes, I am aware in the grand spectrum of life, they are just materialist plastic toys but, in the meantime, I'm loving them!

Shadowland Magazine would like to thank Jonathan not only for taking the time for this interview, but also for his generosity in providing such extraordinary photos of his extensive collection.

Jonathan's flickr page, with photos of even more rare prototypes, can be visited at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/36185771@N06/>





By
Todd Werner

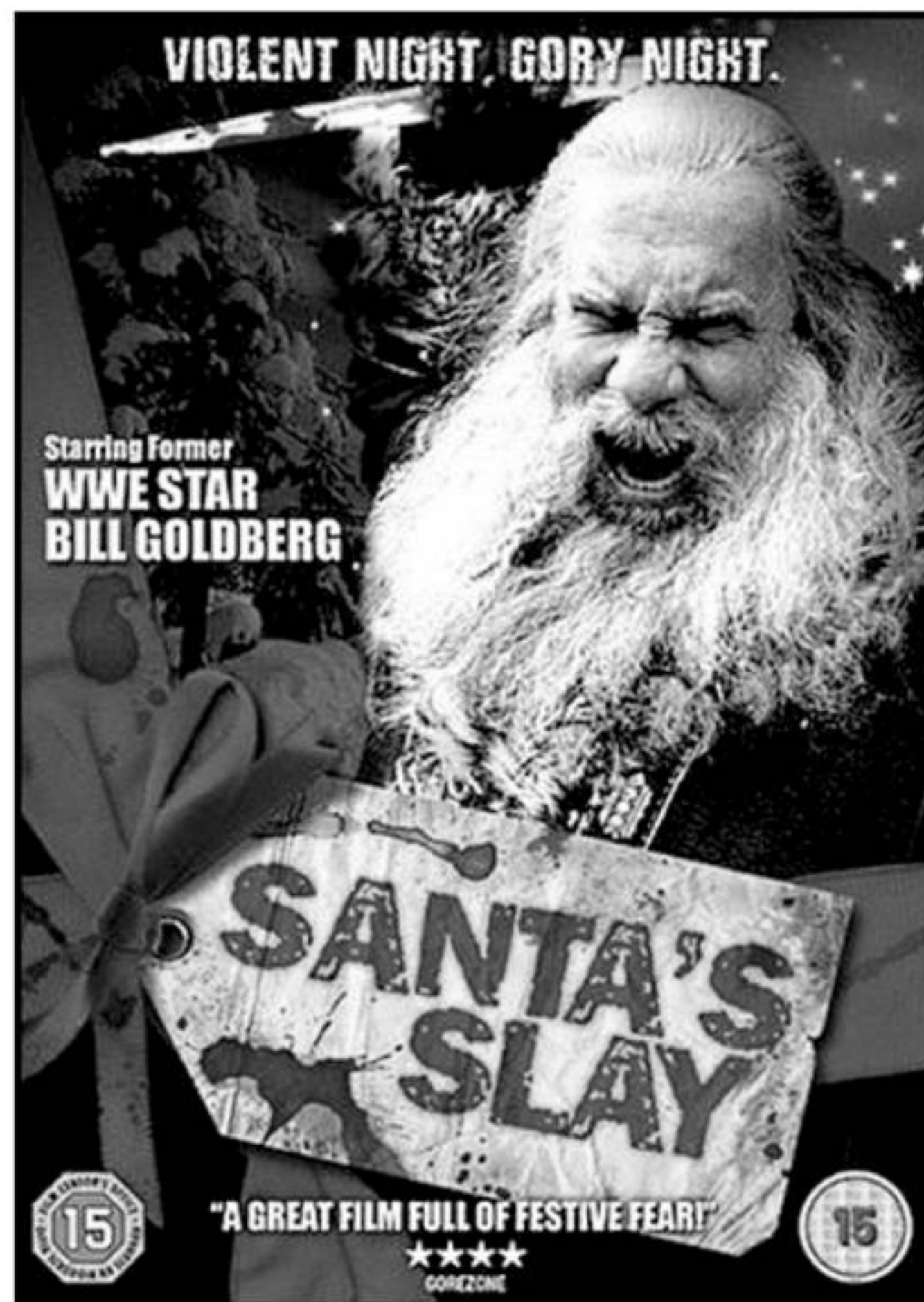
They say Christmas is the time for 'Peace on Earth' and 'Good Will' towards fellow man, however, in the realm of the horror genre, Christmas is often a blood-soaked recipe for ho-ho-horror! While *It's A Wonderful Life*, *A Christmas Story*, and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* are always great films to watch each and every holiday season, there exists an entire subgenre for those who would rather sit down and have a *scary* little Christmas...

Here's a frightfully festive list of the top 10 best Christmas-themed horror films!

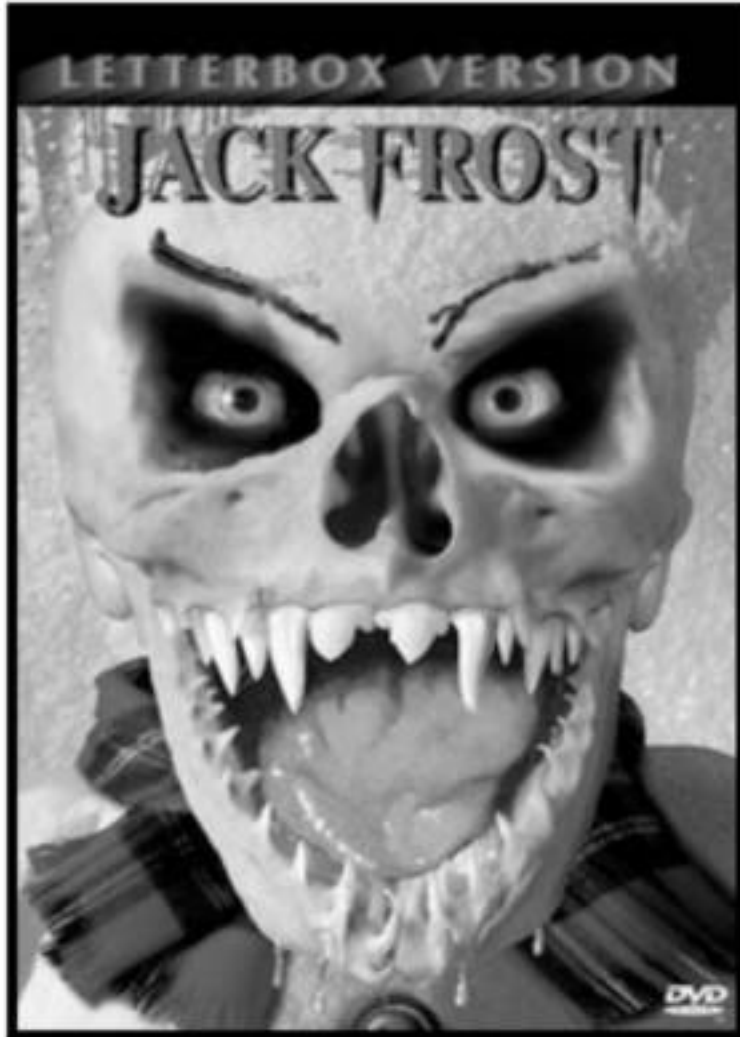
10. SANTA'S SLAY (2005)

You have to give *Santa's Slay* at least this much, it's a pretty funny plot device on how they get Santa to be an evil character. Apparently, ol' Saint Nick was really a hell-spawned demon who lost a bet with an angel and therefore has spent the last thousand or so years being the merry giftgiver. However, after said time, the bargain is off, and Santa goes out to spread some X-Mas fear instead of cheer.

Fun best describes *Santa's Slay* and it never takes itself seriously, and who would think that it does? After all the movie's biggest endorsement is "WWE Star" Bill Goldberg as Santa!



9. JACK FROST (1997)



This holiday horror romp predates the Michael Keaton film of the same name by one year. Jack Frost is more ridiculous than *Santa's Slay*, but that's what makes it so great in a "it's so bad, it's good" kind of way. Besides, the plot sells itself!

While a convicted serial killer is being transported during a Christmas Eve snowstorm, a

freak accident with a tanker truck (one that's hauling mysterious chemicals, of course) turns the killer into a murderous snowman. Hilarity, and some mild horror, ensues including a scene where the local town's sheriff tries to melt the sinister snowman with a hair dryer. If that doesn't get you in a Christmas mood, what will?



8. RARE EXPORTS: A CHRISTMAS TALE (2010)

Finland offers up their take on the horror X-Mas genre with *Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale*. This is one film that should be seen with limited knowledge of the plot to truly enjoy. The basic premise is that Santa Claus is unearthed in an archaeological dig. Though not in the same tried-and-true horror vein as many of the other films on this list, it's certainly a must-see. Fans of dark humor will be especially at home with this one. Don't be surprised if *Rare Exports* develops quite a cult following in years to come.

7. DON'T OPEN TILL CHRISTMAS (1984)

The 'killer Santa' class of film is a genre all its own, following a very basic premise: deranged psychopath dressed in a Santa outfit goes on a killing spree. That's about it. Well, *Don't Open Till Christmas* turns that plot around slightly. This time, a deranged psychopath goes on a killing spree, targeting people dressed as Santa. This flick has all the trappings of the standard slasher film, which may or may not be a good thing depending on your particular taste in horror films. But for those who enjoyed *Friday the 13th*, *April Fools Day*, *The Prowler*, and the like, will be in for a treat.



6. BLACK CHRISTMAS (2006)

A remake of the 1974 original that tells the story of a group of Sorority girls who get stalked by a bloodthirsty maniac on Christmas Eve. While the remake doesn't hold a candle to the original, it is not without its own merit and well worth a viewing. Whether you see the 84 minute version or the 94 minute unrated cut, both move at a brisk pace and never lose focus. 2006's *Black Christmas* is a genuine throwback to 1980s slasher films and never condescends to the genre (unlike the 'hip' trend that the *Scream* franchise set). Of course, to match the shock value of the '80s slasher scene, *Black Christmas* amps up the blood, guts, and gore to new heights...so be ready for a few eyeballs

to roll and dismembered limbs to drop.

On a sad note, it's worth mentioning that this film features the last score composed by the late Shirley Walker, who was responsible for the brilliant musical scores of *Batman: The Animated Series*, *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*, and *Escape from L.A.*, among many, many other works.



[illegible]

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5. SILENT NIGHT, BLOODY NIGHT (1974)

An intriguing low-budget film, unfortunately marred by the horrendous DVD prints currently available. At times, this one has a slower pace than many on this list – but don't fault it for that. *Silent Night, Bloody Night* has a great story and, if you can get past some wordy scenes and the less-than-stellar print, you will find yourself in for an enjoyable 81 minutes.

A man inherits a mansion that has a grisly past, one that the local townspeople intend to keep buried. Throw in a Christmas backdrop, John Carradine, some creepy moments, and you have a winner.

Be warned, there's also an 88 minute version and a butchered 64 minute version. The movie is supposedly in the public domain, and as such, one can view it in its entirety (the 81 minute cut) on youtube at this very moment.



4. CHRISTMAS EVIL (1980)

Differing from many of the typical Christmas horror movies, this one really tries to make you sympathetic to the psycho. Though, in the case of *Christmas Evil*, it's more of a man who just really, really loves the ideals of Christmas...but to *psychotic* levels. Things only take a turn for the worst when the maniac in question finds out that many people aren't as into the X-



Mas spirit as he is. And stick around for the last couple of minutes and you'll bear witness to one of the best – if not *the* best (and most bizarre) – endings out of any film on this list.



3. "AND ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE"– TALES FROM THE CRYPT (1972/1989)



Okay, we're kind of cheating here – because this is just one of the stories in the 1972 *Tales From The Crypt* anthology film, nevertheless, it's one of the best Christmas horror stories ever, so it has been included.



Ironically *And All Through The House* didn't originate from EC Comics' *Tales From The Crypt* comic series, instead first appearing in *The Vault Of Horror*.

The plot follows an escaped mental patient in a Santa suit who pays a visit to a house inhabited by Joan Collins. This is one of the first

examples of the deranged killer-Santa formula and, equally, is one of the best.

Years later Larry Drake (*Dark Night of the Scarecrow*) would portray the maniacal Santa-outfitted fiend on the *Tales From The Crypt* HBO show in a retelling of the story. This version fares even better than the '72 original and for those that only have twenty-or-so minutes to spare, but still want their horror/Christmas fix, are well-advised to seek this treasure out.



STOCKING STUFFER!

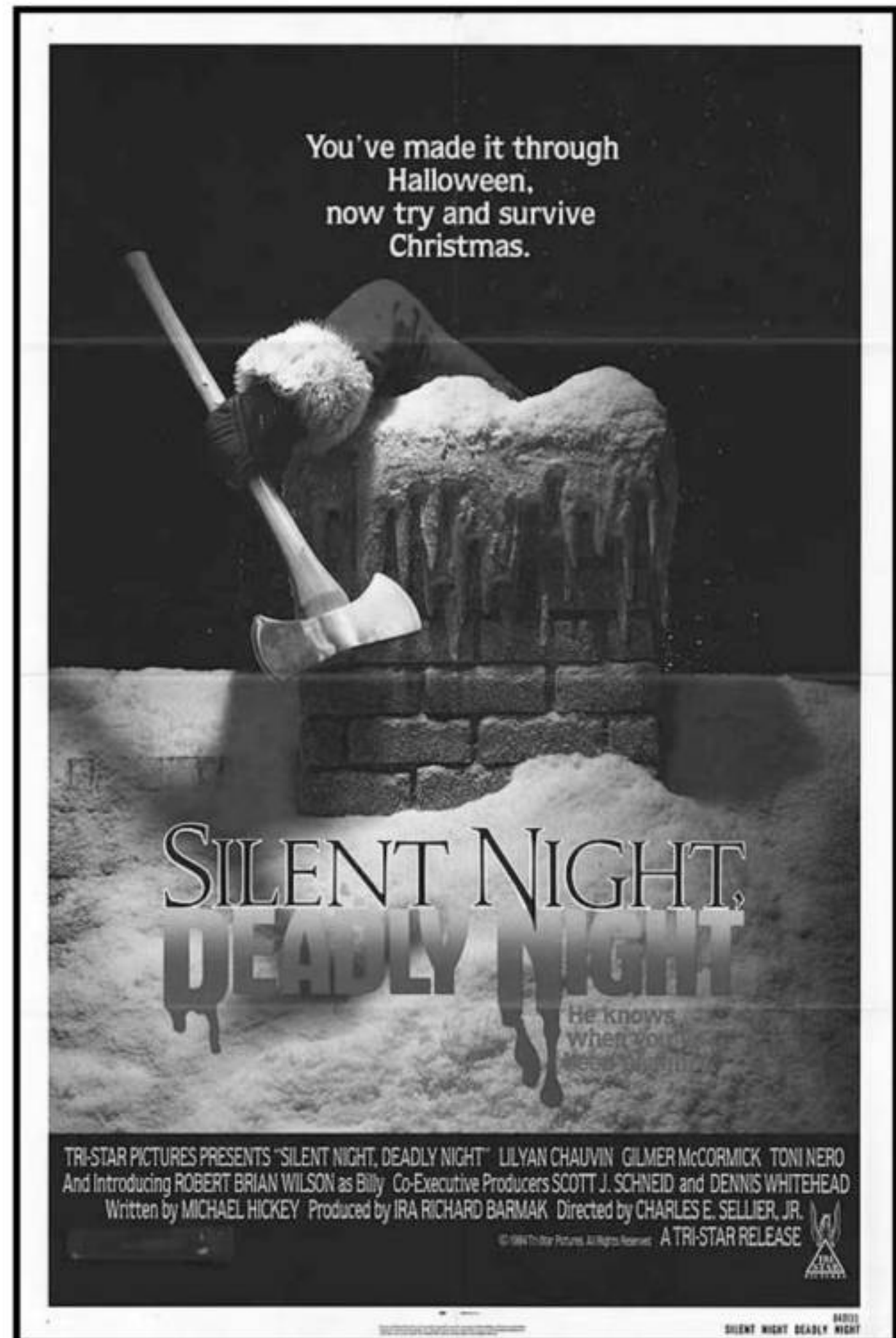


Looking for a few tunes to get you in a horrifically good Christmas mood? *Tales From The Crypt's* very own Crypt Keeper released an X-Mas album, *Have Yourself a Scary Little Christmas*, back in the mid-'90s. This 15-track CD had such chart-topping holiday hits as *Deck the Halls with Parts of Charlie*, *Twelve Days of Cryptmas*, and *Should Old Cadavers Be Forgotten*.

2. SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT (1984)

Many would argue that this is the last word on killer Santa films, and with good reason. *Silent Night, Deadly Night* tells the story of a young boy whose

parents are murdered by a thug in a Santa suit. This lands the unfortunate boy in an orphanage run by an ultra-strict and semi-delusional Mother Superior. Years later, when the boy gets a job at a local store, he is asked to dress up like Santa for a Christmas event...as you could probably imagine, this doesn't end well and a blood-soaked rampage ensues.



For those who just can't get enough *Silent Night, Deadly Night*, have no fear. There's four sequels to quell your hunger, though none reach the height of the original. Though it's still priceless to see Mickey Rooney in *Silent Night, Deadly Night 5: The Toy Maker*.



1. BLACK CHRISTMAS (1974)

A decade before *Silent Night, Deadly Night* was released audiences were exposed to perhaps the most enduring Christmas horror film of all time, *Black Christmas*. Starring Olivia Hussey, Margot Kidder, and John Saxon, this is not one to miss...plus it was directed by Bob Clark! That's right, the man responsible for the signature holiday classic, *A Christmas Story*.

While not as visceral as the 2006 remake, 1974's *Black Christmas* deserves credit as the first true 'slasher' film. At the very least, it provided the formula that would become prevalent during the gory '80s teenage horror film boom (i.e. young people stalked by a mysterious, unstoppable killer). Today many credit John Carpenter's *Halloween* with instigating the slasher subgenre, but many forget that it really started with a different holiday...*Black Christmas*.



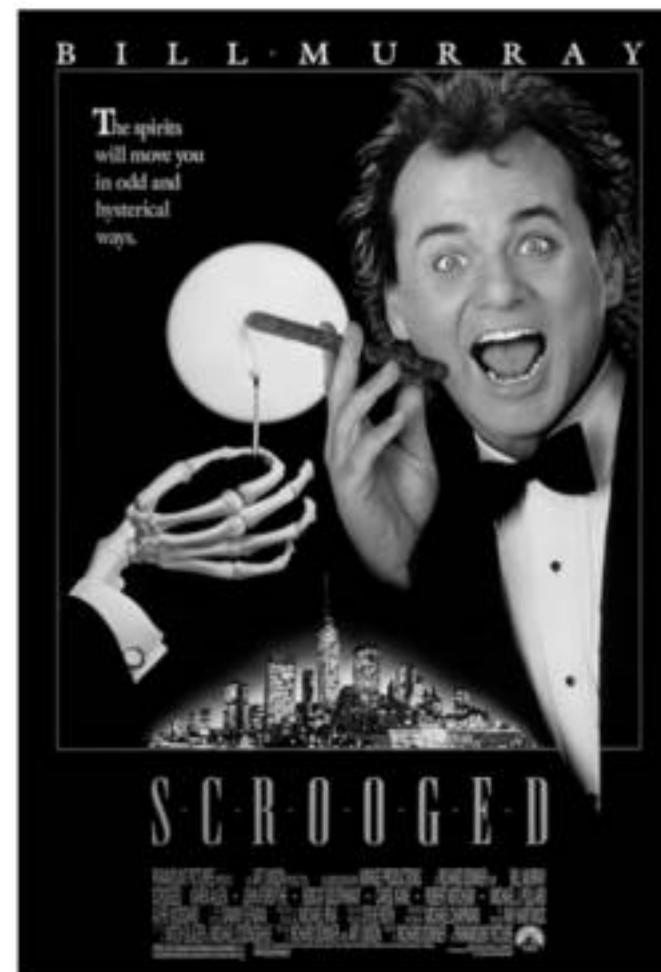
OTHER NOTABLE CHRISTMAS PICKS:

What follows are films that don't sit solely in the horror genre, but branch out somewhat while still retaining an air of horror. Even so, they are worthy of any Christmas marathon.

GREMLINS (1984)

What Christmas would be complete without Gizmo? A classic by the great Joe Dante, many forget that *Gremlins* is actually a genuine Christmas movie.

Not only does the film take place during the holiday, but it's an integral part of the plot – young Billy Peltzer receives a Mogwai as an X-Mas gift from his dad, thus setting in motion the madness to follow.



SCROOGED (1988)

Ah, the days before CGI...and the special effects still hold up nicely. Bill Murray, starring as a self-centered television executive, is haunted by three ghosts in a modern retelling of *The Christmas Carol*. Despite being a comedy, there are some great underlying horror elements.

BATMAN RETURNS (1992)

Tim Burton's dark, brooding, and atmospheric follow-up to his '89 blockbuster hit is worthwhile to watch any time of year – but the plot of *Batman Returns* is set during Christmas, so what better excuse to watch it than now?

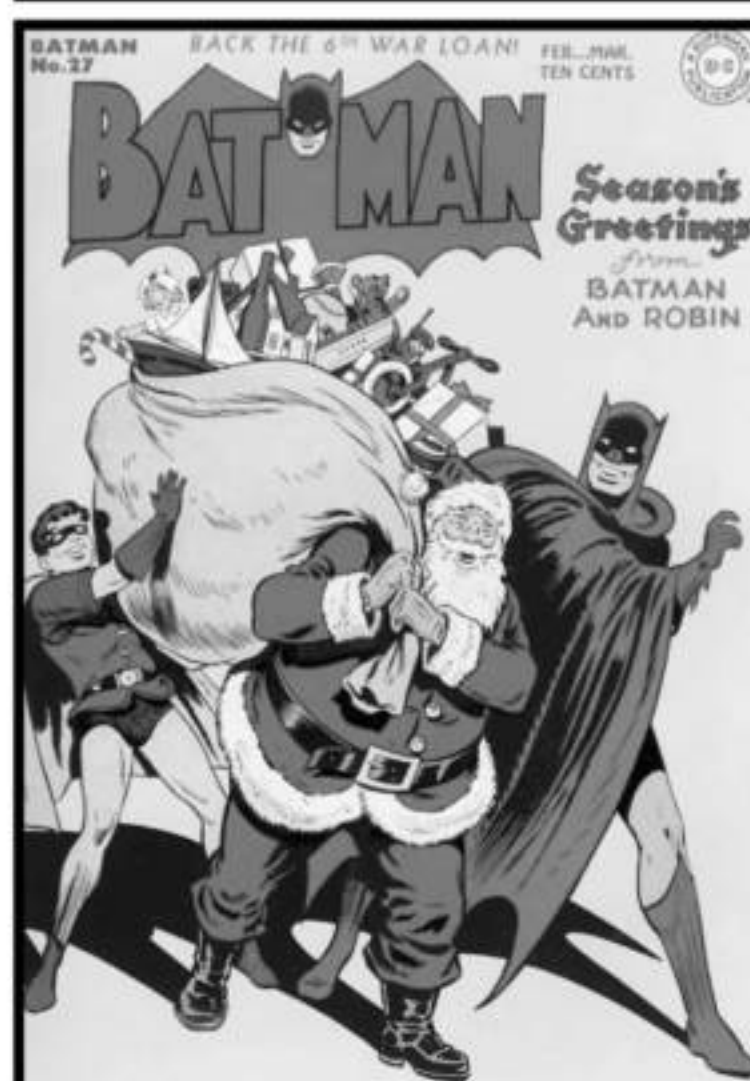


Or...if you'd rather spend a quiet Christmas away from the TV and with some quality literature, there's always this...

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #378



Not since Dickens' *The Christmas Carol* has a story captured the spirit of the holiday quite like the Hulk in mortal combat against a crowbar wielding Santa. But why be picky? There's a number of comics at hand to get into the seasonal swing of things!



GHOULISH TUNES... AN INTERVIEW WITH GHOULTOWN

By Jim Mills

Ghoultown has been rolling out quality music since before the turn of the millennium. Each record shares tales of everything that is cool. Ghoultown mainman Count Lyle spends some quality time answering questions that have been festering with me for a while now.

JIM MILLS: Ghoultown is self described as "Hellbilly", fusing some great influences, but the topics you cover are pretty brutal, how on earth do you come up with songs like "Fistful of Demons" which is an absolute brutal and disgusting song?

COUNT LYLE: In the case of "Fistful of Demons", I needed to come up with a new original song for a compilation we were going to be on. I came up with the main riff and then thought of the title which, of course, is a twist on the Sergio Leone movie *Fistful of Dollars*.

After I had a cool title, I just started writing words, combining western themes with horror. The words usually come out onto the page very quickly. It's like I'm imagining a short horror film in my head. If I like the basic idea, I then go back and hone them until I have the final lyrics. In the case of this song, it ended up as a tale about a "demon baby" that was murdered by his own horrified mother. Later on, the kid comes back for revenge.

JM: How do you maintain the integrity of the Ghoultown sound as the years go on. You've been in the business a very long time and surely you see how musicians keep a name but musically it has little to do with what was first started, either from maturity level, age, intoxicants etc...

CL: It's true that songwriting can change over time due to changes in life or whatever. Since music is usually influenced by what's around a songwriter, if that changes, then possibly the music will change. I still like the concept of Ghoultown and my life is still pretty much the same as when I started the band, so I've been able to keep the music somewhat consistent. But even we have evolved over time. The original songs were a bit more twangy whereas the new stuff is heavier and more amped up. The integrity is still there, but I think the band's sound has evolved and improved with time.

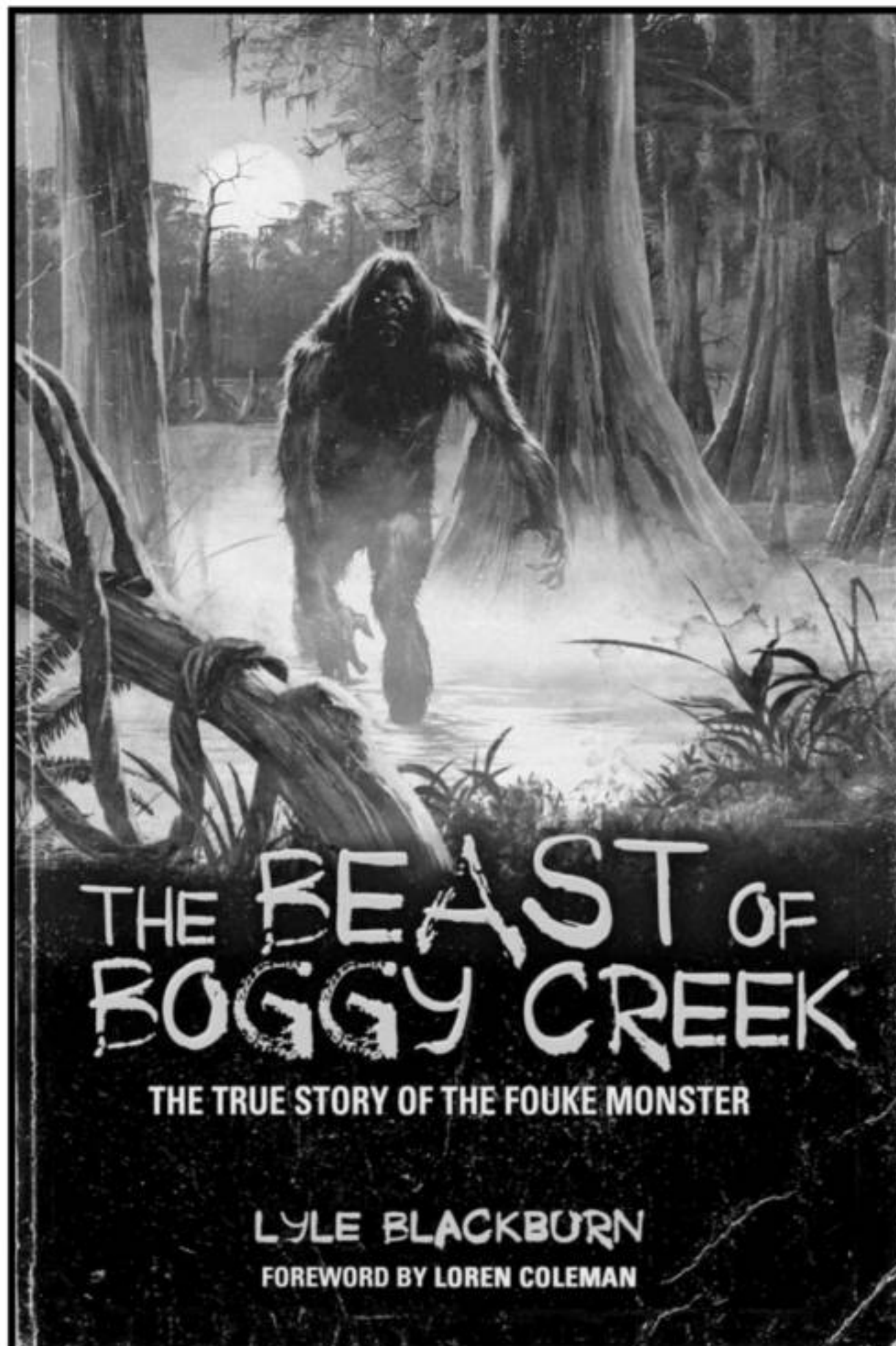


JM: The brass section of Ghoultown is pretty slick, how difficult is it to find people who fit the criteria for Ghoultown that play brass?

CL: Extremely hard. When I first had the idea of adding a spaghetti western type trumpet, I never really thought I could find any players to deliver that live. But I was lucky to have found a few guys that have stuck with us. Our original trumpet player, J. Luis, set the stage and played on the first few CDs. Grimm joined around 2006 and has been with us ever since. His contribution is very significant.

JM: You recently published a book *The Beast of Boggy Creek*, how has the transition from musician to author been?

CL: Easy. I've always been active on the side with writing, doing articles for various music magazines, writing for *Rue Morgue*, the Ghoultown comic book, and of course song lyrics, so it's a natural thing. Publishing a book is just another expression of my creativity, like the music. The only thing that's taken me by surprise is the incredible response to the book. It's been far more crazy than any music release I've been involved in. I'm doing so many radio and podcast interviews now, speaking engagements, and book signings, that it's really taken over my life lately. As such, I've already started working on another book.



JM: Can you give some spoilers about the book that we may not know about this famous mythological monster?

CL: What most people don't realize is that there is a much longer history of the "Fouke Monster" in the southern Arkansas area. People always think that the sightings happened back in the 1970s and that was it, and that the movie *The Legend of Boggy Creek* was mostly made up. But what I discovered is that the thing had been seen by the locals going back as far as 1908, and there's been some amazing sightings all the way up until today. Most of what is dramatized in the movie is based on actual sightings by real people. Once I started researching the subject and interviewing people in the area, I realized that there definitely might be something to all of this. It's pretty creepy when you start putting together all the pieces.

JM: Ghoultown worked with one of the legendary icons of our lifetime Elvira, and as I understand it she rarely does cameos. How in hell did you line that up?

CL: A few years ago we were playing a horror convention VIP party where Elvira's manager happened to see us. He loved the band, so he told Elvira – Cassandra – about us. The next day I was hanging out with some friends at the convention and someone ran up and said, "Elvira wants to meet you, get to your booth." So I headed back to our guest booth and sure enough, Cassandra came by with her entourage and talked for a few minutes. During that time she suggested I write a new song for her. I had a short meeting with her manager later on and came up with a plan to write a song and maybe shoot a video if it worked out. Two weeks later, I sent them a demo of the song, which they liked. From



there we recorded it and decided to do a video. I called up our friend, artist/director Gris Grimly, out in Los Angeles and asked if he wanted to direct. He was excited about the opportunity, so once he was on board we headed out to Hollywood and shot the video. Cassandra was able to hook us up with the Magic Castle out there, so that's where most of the video was shot. She was great to work with and she worked really hard on the project. I'm a life-long fan, so I'm really honored to have had the opportunity to work with her.

JM: What's your favorite topic to write about for the band? Undead cowboys, drinking, shooting pistols or dark haired women?

CL: I like it all really. It's some of the things that make my life interesting, so I just reflect that in the lyrics I write.

JM: On the subject of dark haired girls, which horror movie maven sits upon the pile of skulls alone? The queen bee so to speak? Moritica? Elvira? Carrie?

CL: I'd have to say Elvira. Not just because Cassandra is a friend, but simply because she has everything a horror queen should have. She's sexy, talented, spooky, dedicated, and has a sense of humor. All of these things are what makes her the most recognized embodiment of Halloween, so to speak.

JM: Let's say I am in Texas during Halloween taking my two boys trick-or-treating, what does Count Lyle's house look like?

CL: It's only been the last two years, since I've taken time off to work on the book, that I've even been home on Halloween. Normally Ghoultown is playing a show that night somewhere. But since I've been home, I've tried to have some fun with it. I fixed up my porch with skeletons, red lights, cobwebs, and a smoke machine. I also got two oil burning torches and lit fires in both of those. Then I dressed up as a skeleton cowboy and sat there on a chair really still so that the trick-or-treaters could not tell from the street if I was a real person or just a creepy dummy. It looked so scary that the kids, and even some adults, would stand at the curb and debate whether they wanted to come up and ask for candy. Some of the younger kids simply refused and walked on to the next house. For the ones that did approach, I would remain still until they got close and then move. That made 'em really scream!

The rest of the neighborhood is really lame and

nobody does much for Halloween, but I try to offer something scary and fun. That's what I remember Halloween being like when I was a kid, so I'm trying to bring that back. Halloween these days is just too safe.

JM: What is the single most horrifying experience you have seen, experienced or felt?

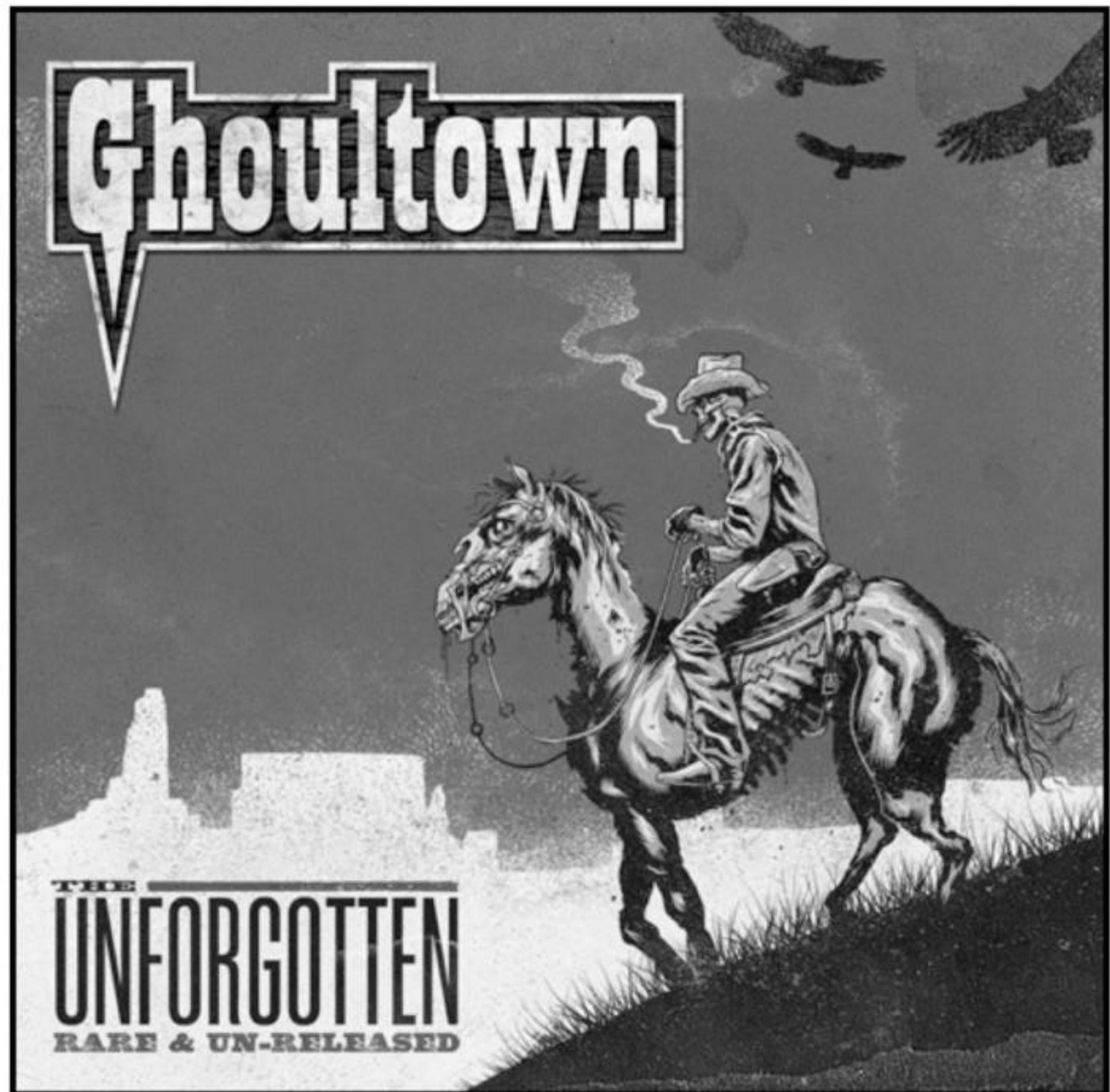
CL: Almost choking to death. The ordeal lasted nearly 7 hours. I finally made it to the hospital where they shot me full of nitroglycerin to relax my esophagus so the food would go down. The whole thing was pretty scary.

JM: Running zombies? Good idea or absolutely stupid?

CL: Running is fine, but really I think zombies should start flying!

JM: If you were to put together a horror movie, either a treatment or direct or whatever involvement you would have (I am sure you have been down that road), who would you cast and why?

CL: I'd cast Jennifer Love Hewitt in every single role



of the movie.

JM: Good call!

Keep up to date with Ghoultown's latest activities at:
www.Ghoultown.com

ZOMBIES: ERA OF THE LIVING DEAD

BY JOSEPH RUBAS

Zombies are everywhere. In movies, video games, fiction, fiction masquerading as non-fiction, on television, and all over the web. You can barely turn around anymore without bumping into one of the living dead, eyes dark and muddled, face rotten and moldering. Such a cultural overexposure would usually spell desensitization and eventually disenchantment...but these are zombies we're talking about. They don't get old, because they never lose the power to scare us. You don't get used to zombies. They are profoundly unnatural, hideous, abhorrent, repulsive.

Man has always feared his dead. Ancient humans used to cover their departed with rocks to prevent their return, and in some cases went so far as to break their legs. It's almost as if, on some fundamental level, they sensed a yawning darkness in the corpses they tended, a doorway to the afterlife that could be opened, a passageway for demons and evil spirits. A man without a soul is a shell; what's to stop something from crawling into him and wearing him like a cloak?

As time wore on, these primal fears were cast into the darkness by the spreading light of reason. We stuffed them deep into our psyche; but they didn't go away; they festered, and eventually they spewed forth from our mouths and into the ears of others.

Sharing horror stories is not only entertainment; it's therapy. Our darkest fears shrivel in the light. They don't go away entirely, but, as the old saying goes: once bitten, twice shy.

Though men have secretly feared them since time out of mind, zombies are a relatively new invention.

The word "zombie" has been around for eons, but up until the 1960s was applied almost exclusively to a brand of voodoo slave placed under a "curse" by a witch doctor. The victim of the so-called curse was poisoned with a potent toxin that slowed bodily functions so profoundly that they appeared dead. After burial, the witch doctor would come and fetch his target, sprint them away, and then revive them. Zombies were kept just drugged enough by their master to prevent escape attempts, but not too drugged to keep them from carrying out whatever simple tasks required of them. The result was a shambling, moaning wretch with hazy, vacant eyes.

Today's zombies, though, were actually not inspired by their voodoo counterparts; they were based



on the ghoul of Arabic folklore.

Said to inhabit wilderness and cemeteries, ghouls primarily subsisted on human bodies dragged from the ground, but were not particularly adverse to attacking and devouring unwary travelers. Though ghouls were really a form of demon, they commandeered the physical form of their prey, and since that meant dead bodies more often than it meant living humans...

For centuries, these two terrified their respective audience, but were virtually unknown everywhere else. Eventually, word got out, and the world at large learned to fear them.

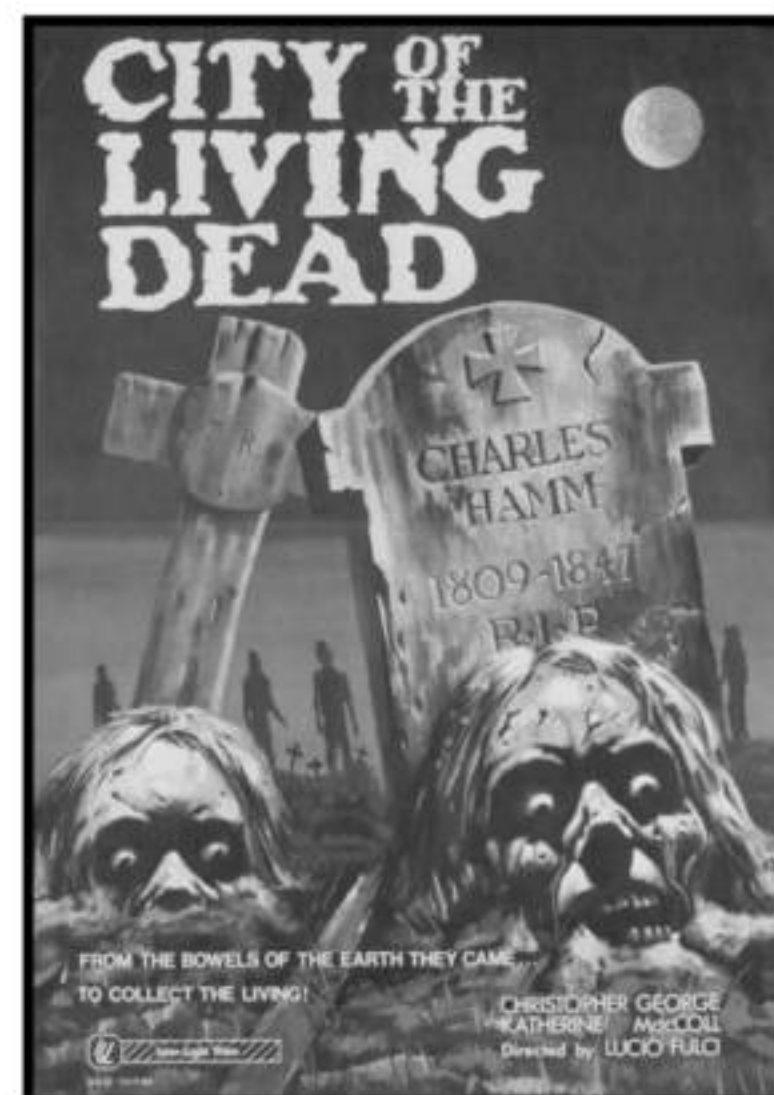
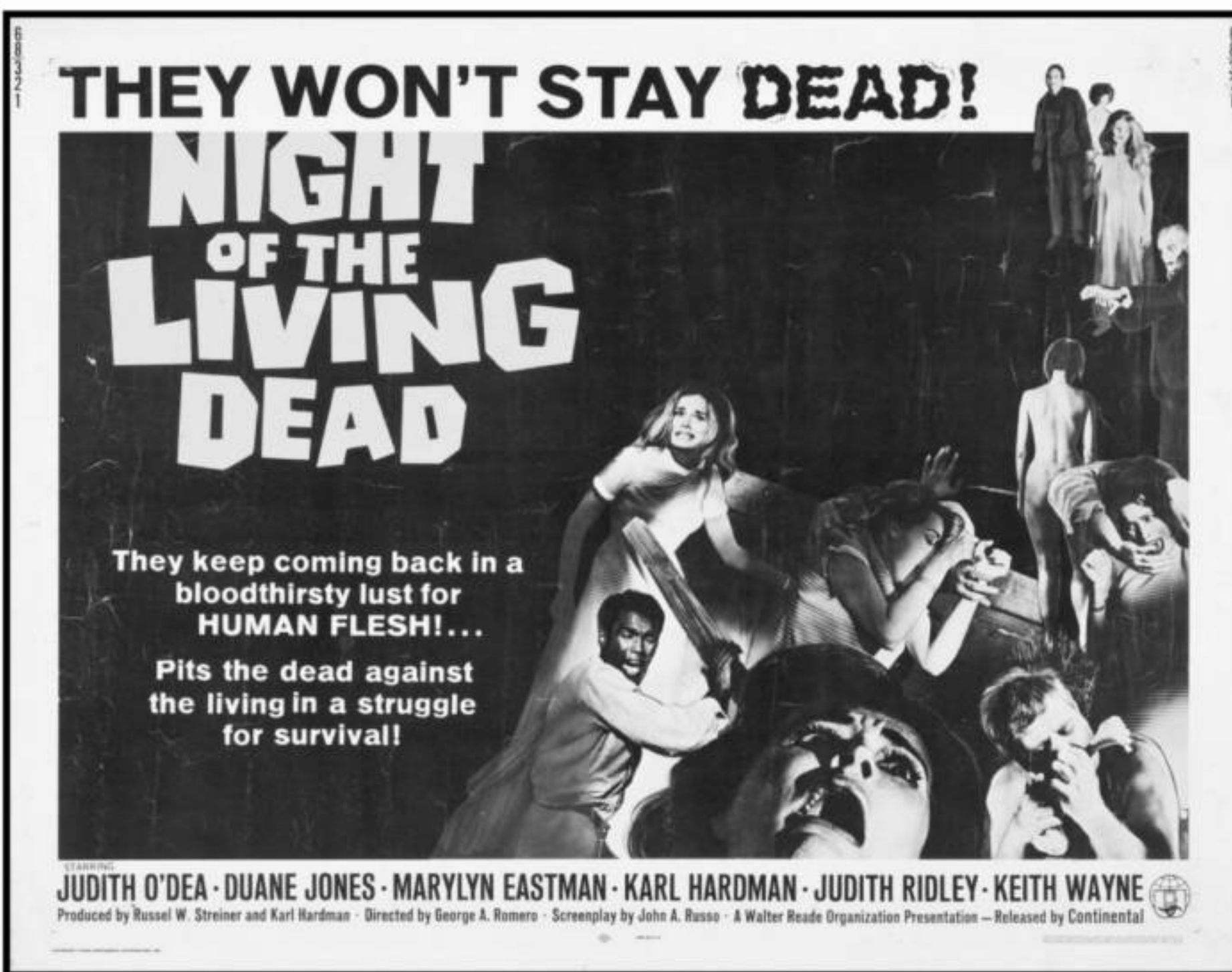
But even so, zombies and ghouls were two separate entities; there was no comparing the two.

Until, that is, 1968.

That year, a low-budget horror movie premiered that shocked the nation: *Night of the Living Dead*, the product of a young Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania filmmaker named George A. Romero. Romero had originally set out to direct a campy, drive-in alien movie, but somehow got off track and wrote his magnum opus. The concept was simple yet terrifying: The bodies of all earth's dead begin to rise and cannibalize the living.

Romero imagined the living dead being slow and unable to reason, shuffling with outstretched arms and distant eyes. The word "ghoul" is used once or twice in the movie, but reviewers, noting the similarities between Romero's creation and a certain inhabitant of voodoo folklore, began calling them "zombies."

Labels notwithstanding, *Night* proved successful, and in its wake an army of filmmakers set out to duplicate it. Like gold prospectors flocking to



Fulci.

In America, zombies didn't fare quite as well as they did in Italy. They appeared only in a handful of films, most notably Sam Raimi's *The Evil*

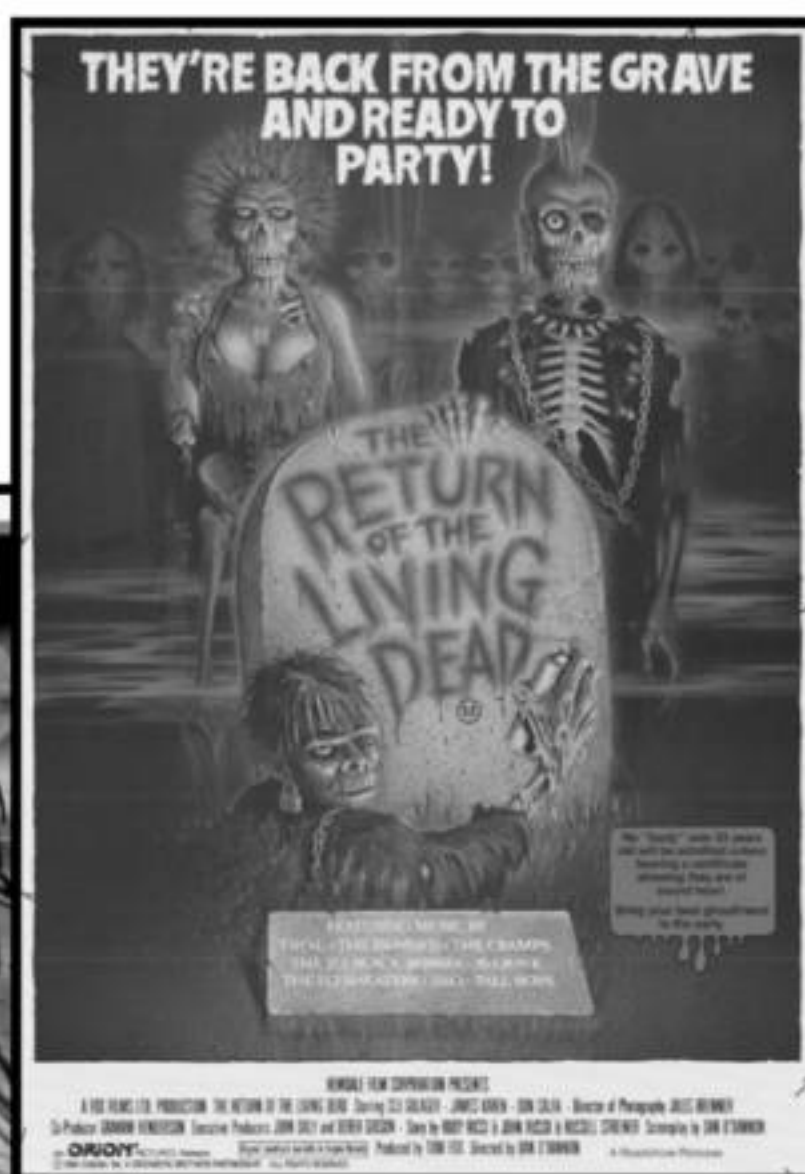
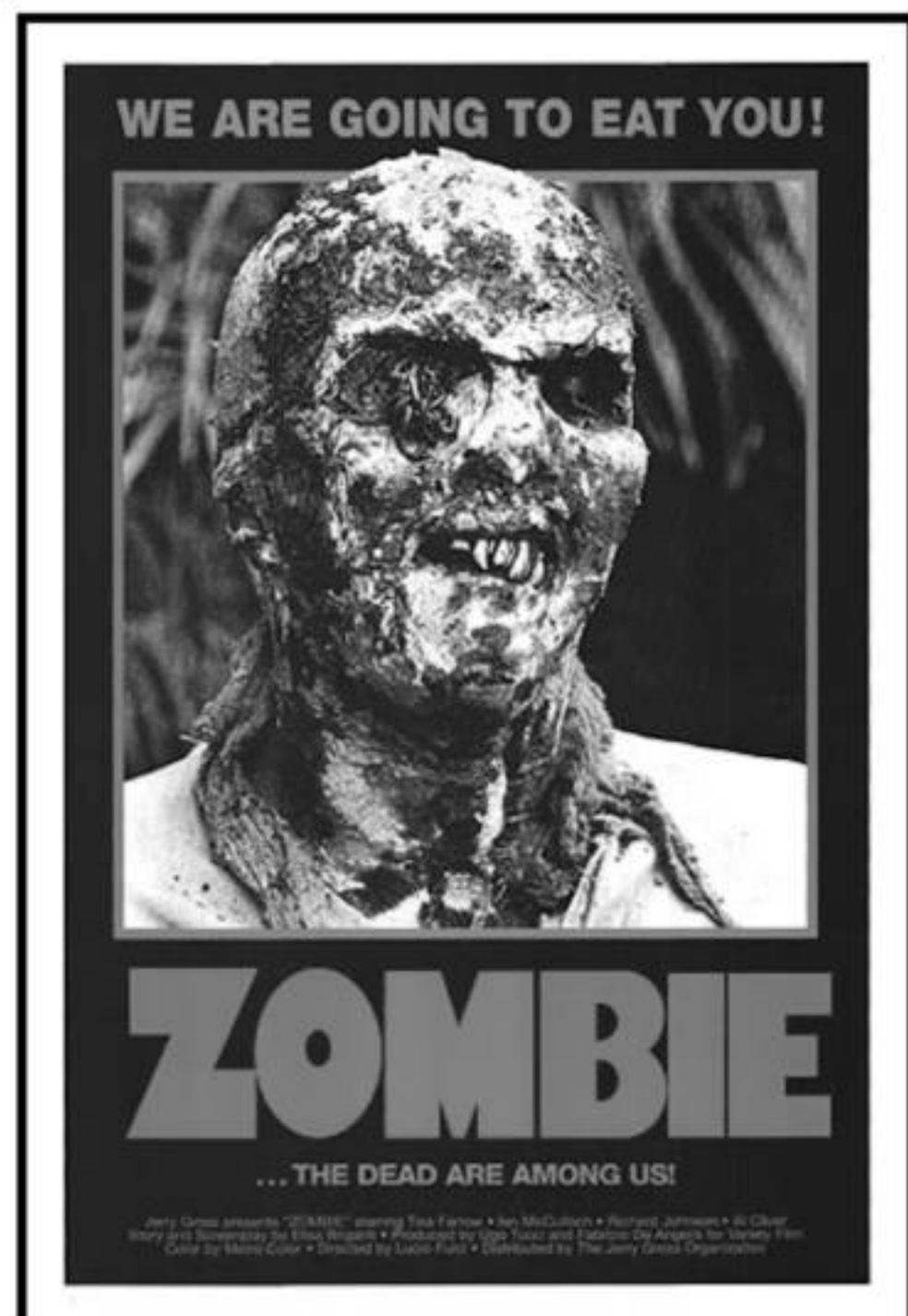
California in the 1840s, writers and directors came to the new genre in droves, churning out a multitude of zombie movies during the seventies and eighties: some of them good, some of them not.

The most active and enthusiastic practitioners of early zombie horror were the Italians, who produced some of the cheesiest, bloodiest, and most terrifying features to ever treat the subject, including *Zombie* (released in 1980 as *Zombi II* in the wake of Romero's astounding sequel to *Night, Dawn of the Dead*), 1981's *Burial Ground: The Nights of Terror*, and *City of the Living Dead*, in 1983. Most of these were the product of one twisted imagination; that belonging to director Lucio

Dead.

In 1985, however, the walking dead got a tremendous boost from the comedy/horror smash *The Return of the Living Dead*, based on a book by John Russo, a partner of Romero's in the sixties. Many sequels followed.

The latter half of the eighties saw zombies quickly becoming the de facto bogeyman. *Night of the Living*



Dead was remade in 1990, and *Dead Alive*, another comedy, appeared in '92.

In 1996, zombies infected a new medium: video games. *Resident Evil* was not the first game to pit players against zombies, but it was more popular than any other before it. The mix of 3D graphics, shooting, the rotting dead, and vast,



Resident Evil (1996)
brought new life to
horror video games.

vivid scenery was a successful combination, and spawned a number of sequels, comics, and films. The trend continued into the next decade, with *The House of the Dead* series, *Left 4 Dead*, and the immensely popular "Zombies" side game in *Call of Duty: Black Ops*, an otherwise straightforward war outing.

Meanwhile, in 2003, zombies came into the 21st Century in a big way. *28 Days Later*, from British director Danny Boyle, featured zombies that weren't dead, but rather infected humans.

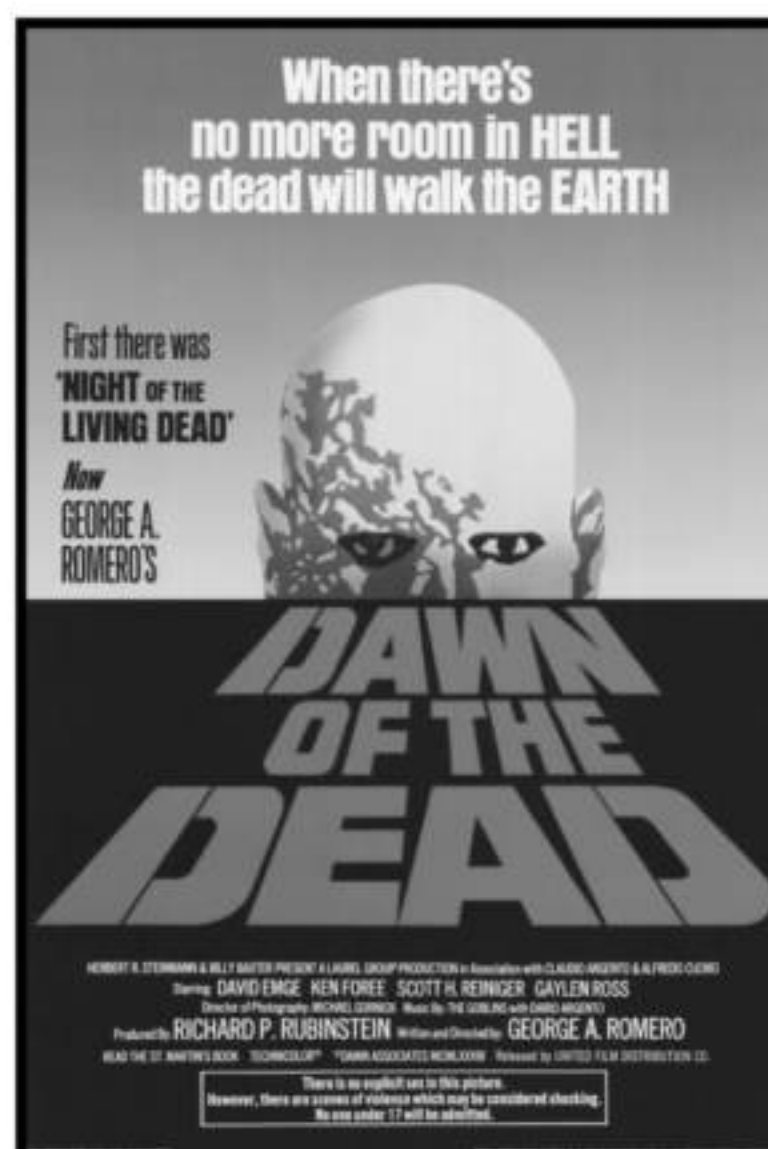


28 Days Later proved that the genre was still
running hot in the new millennium.

Two years later, also from across the pond, *Shaun of the Dead*, a comedy, premiered. Following a group of urban survivors through an overrun London, *Shaun* was, in spirit, an homage to Romero's iconic *Dead* series.

The latter years of the "OO's" birthed a new slew of zombies films. Most recently, zombies were given serious consideration thanks to *The Walking Dead*, a dramatic television series which, as of this writing, airs on AMC.

As for the man who started it all, the grandfather of the genre, George Romero has continued making films. After *Night of the Living Dead*, he wrote



has become a cult classic (needless to say).

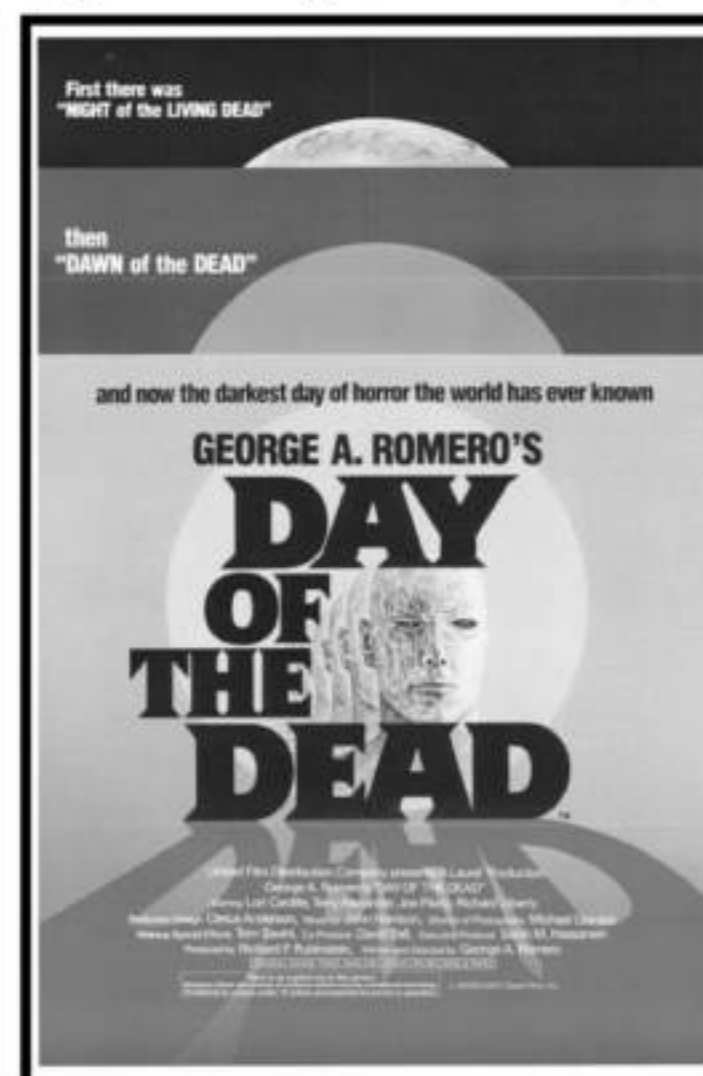
The next *Dead* offering came in 1985. *Day of the Dead* is as dark and gritty, brooding and violent, as any other film in the genre. It depicted a slightly larger group (composed mainly of soldiers and government scientists) hiding in a subterranean bunker and desperately trying to find a cure to the apocalypse raging above. *Day* is first and foremost a human drama; the zombies are merely an off-screen presence until the finale.

Though it was considered a failure upon release, *Day* amassed a huge following on VHS and DVD (Romero once said that it was his favorite of the *Dead* films, even though it paled in comparison to his epic original vision. The first screenplay featured a larger complex, more characters, and even a battalion of tamed zombies wired to combat their wild counterparts).

Romero focused on other projects for the next two decades, leaving his dead films to be remade one-by-one. In 2005, *Land of the Dead*, which incorporated many of the elements discarded from the original *Day*, hit theaters. Considered the weakest in the trilogy, *Land*, made on a much bigger budget than the others, was successful at the box office, and introduced Romero to a new generation.

Zombies, ghouls, "Those things..." whatever you call them, zombies are astronomically popular. From books to art to music, the living dead are among us, stalking our nightmares and feeding upon the minds of the creative. It's safe to say that zombies are entrenched and ready for a long, merciless siege.

Here's to hoping it never ends.



and directed a number of movies, including the very zombieish *The Crazies* about a form of rabies turning the residents of a small Pennsylvania town into murderous lunatics, and *Martin*, a vampire film.

In 1978, Romero returned to the zombie genre with *Dawn of the Dead*, which has another small group of hardy survivors finding refuge from a dead world in a suburban shopping mall. *Dawn*

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BY THE NUMBERS



2

Number of seasons the Hanna-Barbera *Godzilla* cartoon lasted.



12

Issues of the original *Watchmen* comic mini-series.



14

Tracks on the *Mad Monster Party* Original Motion Picture Soundtrack.



40

Days it took to film *Black Christmas* (1974).



200

Extras that were cast as zombies and townspeople in 1968's *Night of the Living Dead*.



14,564,027

Dollars in box office gross for *Hellraiser* (1987). The film cost only \$1 million to make.

Reviews of the Best (And Worst) in Horror, Sci-Fi & Fantasy!

BEYOND FANTASTIQUE!

[bee-ond: outside the understanding, limits, or reach of; past: beyond comprehension.]

[fan-tas-teek: a French term for a cinematic or literary genre encompassing horror, science fiction and fantasy.]

FILM

THE MAD MAGICIAN

Columbia Pictures; 1954, Running Time: 72 Min., Dir: John Brahm, Writer: Crane Wilbur; Cast: Vincent Price, Mary Murphy, Eva Gabor.



MAGIC, MAYHEM, AND MADNESS...WITH A PRICE

Vincent Price stars as Don Gallico, an illusion designer who yearns to take to the stage instead of simply creating elaborate magic devices behind the scenes. As the film opens, Gallico is getting his big chance to perform before an audience, dubbing himself Gallico the Great. The show is a hit, but just before Gallico is about to introduce his latest invention, a new illusion called "The Girl and the Buzz Saw", the curtain crashes down at the behest of his employer, Mr. Ormond. With Gallico subsequently humiliated, Ormond waves around a contract stating that any illusion the aspiring magician invents is automatically *his* property, which in-turn goes to the use of the Great Rinaldi, a sleazy magician and Gallico's rival.

Later we learn that Ormond has not only robbed Gallico of his dream to perform, but has also stolen away Gallico's wife (Eva Gabor). Ormond makes the unwise move of goading the magician on and Gallico snaps, killing his employer – fittingly with his newfangled buzz saw illusion. As could be expected, in no time at all, the body count begins to ratchet up. Fortunately for Gallico, he is also a master of disguise and voice mimicry, allowing himself to dress up as his victims to elude suspicion.

Many have compared the *The Mad Magician* to Price's earlier film, *House of Wax* (1953). The similarities are unavoidable, both are basic revenge tales,





feature period settings, and were filmed in 3D. Even so, there's an undeniable charm about *The Mad Magician* that *House of Wax* can't touch. As a viewer it's easy to become invested in Price's portrayal of Gallico, sympathizing with him even after he commits his first heinous crime. We hope he won't be caught, but ultimately know that his murderous offense must be punished. Price was king at taking any character, no matter how villainous, and implanting a very human, pitiable soul into them, *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (1971), being a perfect example. In truth, Price embodied the best of the Grand Guignol style of horror, and he applies all of his talents here.

Running at a brisk 72 minutes, *The Mad Magician* never once drags, becomes bogged down by needless filler, or out-of-the-way subplots. The characters are interesting and there's ample tension throughout, complete with a Hitchcockian climax reminiscent of *Rear Window* (1954). *The Mad Magician* is currently available on DVD-R through Sony Pictures 'Choice Collection' print-on-demand label. While this is a suitable way to view the film, it's by no means the best. Fans who own a 3D television and a PlayStation 3 can download the film off the PlayStation Network (PSN) in both high-definition *and* in eye-popping 3D. It's no exaggeration to say that this is one of the best looking 3D films currently available on the home market, and anyone with the means to see it in all three dimensions (as it was intended) should not miss the opportunity. The transfer is crystal clear and the 3D depth is nothing short of phenomenal from stairway banisters to parts of Gallico's illusions pushing *through* the screen. And these aren't even the gimmicky scenes – fun moments where Gallico performs a water illusion with his wand will leave you grinning. The 3D is varied too...there's a nifty yo-yo scene, a sequence where a

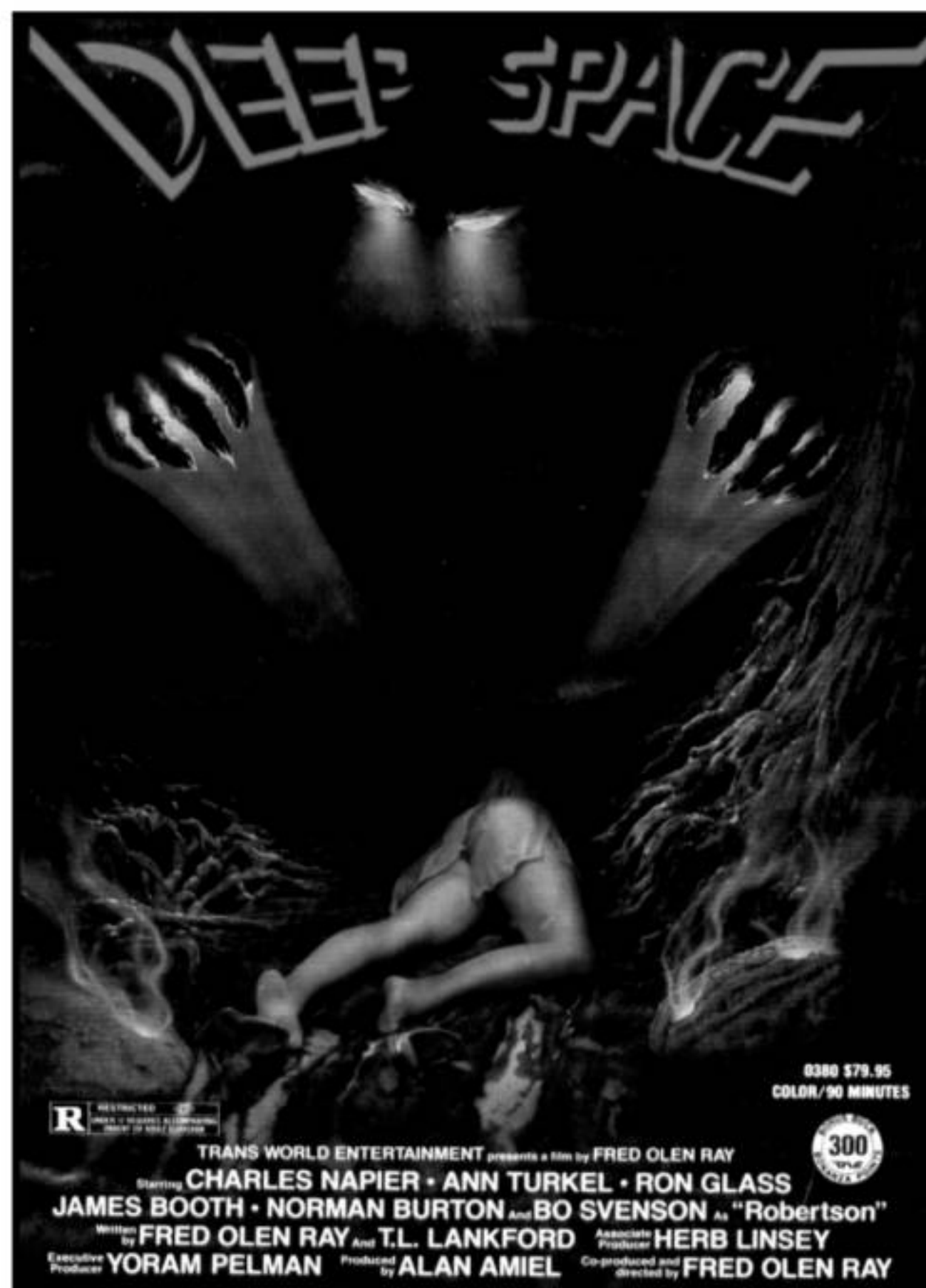
promoter's arm stretches forward – literally through the screen, and a moment when Gallico tests his buzz saw trick, spraying saw dust at the viewer. *The Mad Magician's* 3D effects and use of outstanding depth puts most of the current films employing the technology to utter shame.

Whether viewing the film in 2D or 3D, it's well worth the meager 72 minutes to see the great Vincent Price, master of macabre, give yet another memorable and timeless performance.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Baines

DEEP SPACE

Trans World Entertainment; 1988, Running Time: 90 Min., Dir: Fred Olen Ray, Writers: Fred Olen Ray, T.L. Lankford; Cast: Charles Napier, Bo Svenson, Julie Newmar.



AN ALIEN OF THE FAMILIAR VARIETY

It's no secret that a number of movies in the '80s "borrowed" heavily from *Alien* (1979). Just look at *Xtro* (1983), *Creature* (1985), *DeepStar Six* (1989), and *Leviathan* (1989) for some of the most blatant examples – but hey, if you're going to cherry pick from other flicks, you may as well do so from the best. *Deep Space*, directed by B-movie maestro Fred Olen Ray, doesn't lift much in the way of *Alien's* story or setting, but its extraterrestrial baddie bears a striking resemblance to a certain multi-jawed xenomorph.

The plot centers on Ian McLemore, played by



Charles Napier (*Rambo: First Blood Part II*), a loose cannon detective who stumbles upon a government conspiracy involving an alien creature. However, said creature isn't actually an alien, but a living weapon cooked up by some clandestine military branch. As could be expected in these situations, the military loses control of their prized monster and it goes on a rampage killing anyone who crosses its path. Bo

Svenson (*Walking Tall*) stands in as the ornery police captain who barks orders but never follows up on them. He suspends McLemore early in the film and takes away his gun, but it doesn't stop the detective from showing up to work the next day.

One of *Deep Space*'s most bizarre elements is the inclusion of Julie Newmar (Catwoman from the 1960's *Batman* TV show) as a psychic who gives McLemore clues where the creature is going to strike next. Keep in mind, that's her only purpose in the film! Who is this woman? Why does she care? No explanations. There are two very important questions you must never ask while watching *Deep Space* – "why?" and "how?" – simply because there are no answers to anything. Case in point, why is the movie called *Deep Space*? Nothing ever takes place in space!

As McLemore tracks down the creature, more silliness occurs. Viewers will be treated to a moment when a security guard searches for a missing cat, not unlike Harry Dean Stanton's scene where he too rummages around for a cat in *Alien*. When the creature appears there's always a mysterious strobe light that blasts on from nowhere and the slimy monstrosity's elongated head could easily have come from something dreamt up by H.R. Giger, granted, only if he scribbled a slipshod design on a napkin.

Deep Space seems a tad out of place for a Fred Olen Ray movie, considering the lack of gore and nudity (though his typical lack of budget is present, to be sure). Alright, so the film has more holes in it than a sweater



chewed through by a frenzy of starved moths, yet I can't bring myself to dislike it. With all of the ridiculousness and utter absurdity it's an amusing romp that *knows* it's a campy B-picture. The actors don't feel like they're just going through the motions and actually make an attempt to 'care' about what's going on. The creature may border on an *Alien* clone, but it's still a well done special effect nonetheless – especially considering the limited budget. If a B-movie that revels in its own ludicrousness is your cup of tea, than *Deep Space* will be a fun viewing experience. It's not dissimilar from some of the B-grade sci-fi flicks churned out in the '50s, just with more visceral elements, though not much. Besides, any film that gives Charles Napier dialogue like, "The street is my boss. Who's yours?" deserves at least one viewing.

Reviewed by Jonathan Singer

GHOST RIDER: THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE

Columbia Pictures; 2012, Running Time: 95 Min., Dir: Mark Neveldine, Brian Taylor, Writers: Scott M. Gimple, Seth Hoffman, David S. Goyer; Cast: Nicolas Cage, Violante Placido, Ciarán Hinds.

WORTHY OF VENGEANCE OR A LACK OF SPIRIT?

"Do your worst!" It's a bold phrase, one that a Marvel executive must have foolishly decreed to *Ghost*



Rider: The Spirit of Vengeance directors, Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor, in some stage of pre-production. Actually, scratch that, the executive must have rounded up *everyone* involved in this pointless, abysmal motorcycle-wreck of a “film” and dared them to ‘do their worst’ because it’s hard to comprehend how this movie wasn’t shelved prior to release.

The paper-thin plot follows Johnny Blaze (aka the Ghost Rider) who, having relocated to Eastern Europe, finds himself at odds with the Devil. Beelzebub is up to a few nefarious deeds, one of which is assuming human form by possessing the body of a young boy. As could be expected, Blaze winds up protecting the boy while trying to find a way to exorcise the ‘Spirit of Vengeance’ from his *own* body.

Standing as a vague continuation to 2007’s *Ghost Rider*, which had been a superior film in every regard, *Spirit of Vengeance* is little more than a mindless, excessive mess. Despite the original *Ghost Rider* faring well at the box office, it didn’t receive much love from critics and comic fans. Truth be told, I found the original outing enjoyable – no masterpiece by any stretch of the imagination – but it was fun to finally see Ghost Rider brought to the screen. After all, before CGI it would have been impossible to faithfully capture a supernatural biker with flaming skull and whirling chains on film. Unfortunately, seeing such CGI creations in utter dreck like *Spirit of Vengeance* proves once and for all that spectacular special effects never equal a spectacular script.

With that said, the first offender in this travesty is the awful screenplay. Characters are cookie-cutter,

dialogue is forced, and the plot is all too typical of comic book based sequels. *Superman II* (1980), *Spider-Man 2* (2004), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), all of which had their respective characters either giving up their powers or wrestling with ‘super-hero’ responsibilities and *Spirit of Vengeance* is no different, except it’s so poorly handled that few are likely to care about the outcome. The irony is that the script had *three* writers, Scott M. Gimple, Seth Hoffman, and David S. Goyer. Looking back at Goyer’s previous work, his screenwriting skills range from impressive to atrocious – and more often than not it’s the latter. *Blade: Trinity* (2004) and *The Unborn* (2009) are both prime examples of his worst efforts, and *Spirit of Vengeance* tops them all.

Ironically, Goyer could have written the greatest script in Hollywood history and it still wouldn’t have had a snowball’s chance, not when it’s being directed by Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor. These two personify everything wrong with the current state of the film industry, wantonly jettisoning story and character development for over-the-top visuals, frenetic (borderline nauseating) camera work, and bizarre directorial decisions that make no contextual sense whatsoever. Neveldine and Taylor were behind *Crank* (2006), *Crank: High Voltage* (2009), and *Gamer* (2009), and while the *Crank* movies fit their visual style in terms of chaotic direction, *Gamer* was a major misfire in every capacity. Worthy of mention is that the two also wrote the script for *Jonah Hex* (2010), DC Comics’ worst film – so it’s fitting that they provide Marvel with its worst film: *Spirit of Vengeance*.

For every frame of the film’s running time, the



camera is in constant irritating motion; two characters are speaking and the camera's swirling overhead, to the side, below, etc. Neveldine and Taylor are comparable to excited children, getting their hands on some newfound camera equipment and going wild. By 2012 the 'tricks' they employ are already tiresome and have been seen in countless other movies, but they keep trying to one-up themselves with even *more* overindulgent techniques. The editing is a horror show all its own, with a pace reminiscent of an adrenaline-charged erratic music video, and that's certainly not a compliment.

Nicholas Cage hits a new low this time around; for years his off-the-wall portrayals have turned him into a caricature and he continues that tradition here. In several scenes Cage hams it up, overacts, and provides some of his worst acting since 2009's *Knowing*. At other times, Cage simply appears bored and annoyed to be on set and meanders his way through. It's a shame, because Cage is capable of turning out a decent performance, like in *Kick-Ass* (2010), unfortunately it wasn't in the cards this time.



It's apparent that no one involved in the film had ever read a single *Ghost Rider* comic; what appeared on screen was not only disrespectful to the source material, it was a direct insult to fans. What little context did follow the comics appears to be gathered from skimming a Wikipedia article on the character's history – and that's being generous. Watching the first film alone doesn't count, folks.

In the mood for a comic book based film about a supernatural, horror-related character? Skip *Spirit of Vengeance* and check out *Man-Thing*, Marvel's direct-to-DVD release, it's an all-around better effort and produced at a fraction of the cost.

Reviewed by Stan Fuller

THE SLEEPING CAR

Triax Entertainment Group; 1990, Running Time: 96 Min., Dir: Douglas Curtis, Writer: Greg Collins O'Neill; Cast: David Naughton, Judie Aronson, Kevin McCarthy.

NO SLEEPING ON THIS TERROR TRAIN

The Sleeping Car stars David Naughton, most known to horror fans for his title role in *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). Naughton sheds the fur this

this time around as Jason McCree, a recent divorcee who moves into an abandoned train car converted into an apartment – unfortunately, it's already occupied by the malicious ghost of the landlady's dead husband. Jason enrolls in the local university to study journalism where he meets the lovely Kim, played by

Judie Aronson (*Friday the 13th Part 4: The Final Chapter*), and eccentric professor Bud, in a role hammed up by Jeff Conaway (*Taxi*). While not much happens early in the film by way of out-and-out horror, we're given a chance to know the characters better. This works because the characters are fairly interesting, none more so than Vincent Tuttle, Jason's superstitious next-door neighbor played by Kevin McCarthy (*Invasion of the Bodysnatchers*).

The Sleeping Car focuses more on humor than scares, and even when the more gore-oriented scenes arrive nothing ever becomes too serious. Jason always has a witty rejoinder on hand and Conaway's professor is played rather cartoonish. Not to say any of this is bad, nor was any of it unintentional. The blood starts to flow when the unwary victims enter Jason's train car (usually uninvited and up to no good). The vengeful spirit, referred to as The Mister, has a few tricks up his sleeve and the kills are inventive and well executed with some nice special effects. The 'death by mattress' sequence is a standout. There's not a very high body count by any means, but the ones featured pull out all the stops.

The Sleeping Car is well worth checking out for anyone interested in a light-hearted ghost story. Word of warning, it's a hard one to find in a physical format (having only been released on VHS and laserdisc) but this rarity is currently available for streaming on Netflix.

Reviewed by Adam Reynolds

THE COMPLETE BOB WILKINS CREATURE FEATURES

November Fire Recordings; 2012, Run Time: 87 Min.

A FOND LOOK BACK AT A UNIQUE HORROR HOST

Between the years of 1966 and 1981 horror fans in Northern California were treated to the distinctive horror hosting talent of Bob Wilkins. His show, *Creature Features*, lasted 1,200 episodes and showcased 1,800 movies – a notable feat for just about any horror host. Unlike his contemporaries, Wilkins eschewed the make-up, garish outfits and ghastly





persona, appearing to viewers as clean-cut everyman with signature cigar always in hand.

For those who are familiar with Bob Wilkins' *Creature Features* program and are from the Bay area, picking up this DVD is a no-brainer, loaded with vintage interviews, segments of the show, trailers and commercials. However, for those not familiar with Wilkins, some may find him a stuffy, uncharismatic host compared to the likes of Zacherley and Elvira, especially due to his persistent barrage of condescending remarks about the horror films featured on his show.

Nevertheless, *The Complete Bob Wilkins Creature Features* serves as an amazing time capsule to an era when horror hosts reigned on television. Spanning 16 years of Wilkins' esteemed career, including his shows on KCRA 3, KTXL 40, and KTVU 2, this video scrapbook not only collects some fantastic moments, it also features the date and titles of each show that aired week-by-week. The various

interviews are a delight to watch, among them Wilkins' speaks with Christopher Lee, John Landis, and Donald Sutherland. An interview with an aging John Carradine proves that, even in his advanced years, the man had an extraordinary recollection of his past roles. There's an interesting bit where Wilkins speaks to John Belushi, fresh off *Animal House*, and Belushi seems none too happy to be interviewed. A brief, but fun, interview with Boris Karloff (and quite possibly Karloff's last interview prior to his death), is included, as well as one with a marvelously witty William Marshall, who had just wrapped up filming *Blacula*.

November Fire Recordings put a lot of care into the presentation of this project, and it shows. The packaging of the DVD itself deserves special mention too. The front cover features some great artwork and the inside of the case provides images of Wilkins' Creature Feature Fan Club membership card and 'Freak Fan Club' certificate.

Even for those unfamiliar with Wilkins' run on *Creature Features* (he was followed by John Stanley in 1979) this DVD is an excellent compilation depicting a time when local television channels actually showed horror films – and for those acquainted with Wilkins' dry wit, checking this out is a must. It's a shame that so many other horror hosts of the past are lacking quality representations of their past work. November Fire Recordings should be commended for the respectable job they did here. Anyone interested in *The Complete Bob Wilkins Creature Features* can get their copy at www.NovemberFire.com. Highly recommended!

Reviewed by Frank Warden



ANIME

ROSARIO + VAMPIRE

Gonzo; 2008, 26 episodes. Based on the manga series by Akihisa Ikeda; Dir: Takayuki Inagaki; Cast: Nana Mizuki, Daisuke Kishio, Misato Fukuen.

A 'BLOOD-LITE' VAMPIRE TALE

When Tsukune fails the high school entrance exam his academic future looks bleak; fortunately, despite his lacking grades, he's accepted into Yokai Academy – a strange out-of-the-way school he's never heard of. And there's a reason for it...Yokai Academy is a school for monsters! Realizing that his acceptance was a mistake, Tsukune tries his best to blend in and hide the fact that he's a human. The situation improves when he runs into Moka, a beautiful classmate who happens to be a vampire. The two quickly become friends, but Moka's blood-sucking tendencies aren't her only secret. Tsukune soon finds out that if the rosary seal around her neck is removed, Moka's innocent demeanor vanishes and she transforms into a gorgeous, yet frightening 'S Class super monster' always eager for a good fight.

The series consists of two seasons, each rounding out to thirteen episodes. The beginning of the first season can become repetitive but, in its defense, it serves as the introduction(s) to many of the series' supporting characters including Kurumu, a lustful succubus, Yukari and Ruby, a pair of witches, and Mizore, a snow fairy. The show goes on to adopt a standard 'harem anime' formula, with all of the main female players declaring their love for Tsukune, leading to often humorous situations.

The second season introduces Kokoa, Moka's delinquent younger sister, who gets the group into all sorts of trouble. Season two has some great character



moments and there are a number of standout episodes to be seen. In short, *Rosario + Vampire* is played more for laughs than anything else and, in that sense, it delivers.

There's plenty of innuendo between the girls and ample displays of fan service – whether that's a good or bad thing depends solely on the tastes of the viewer. Based off a manga series, the anime differs from the source material's more subdued tone, but there's still enough action, plot development, and intriguing characters to validate a recommendation. At times the series *does* take a serious turn, like in the last few episodes of the first and second seasons, and these moments serve as a welcomed change of pace.

Rosario + Vampire is not an anime for everyone, but it has some truly great characters and is a fun supernatural romp. By the way, the voice acting in both the Japanese and English versions are equally well done, so it's worth giving each a listen.

Reviewed by Lisa Stilts

VIDEO GAMES

THE WALKING DEAD: THE GAME

Telltale Games; 2012, Platforms: PSN, XBLA, PC and Mac.

SURVIVAL HORROR AT ITS FINEST

The Walking Dead: The Game by Telltale Games is based on the comic book series *The Walking Dead* by Robert Kirkman. It takes place during the initial zombie outbreak in Atlanta, prior to when Rick Grimes awakens to find himself in an abandoned hospital.

You play as Lee Everett, a black college professor who was convicted of murdering his wife's lover. While the world around him ends, Lee finds that he has a chance to start his life over.

Lee's story is one of redemption and second chances. It focuses on his attempt to atone for his dark past by taking care of an orphaned little girl named Clementine. The relationship between Lee and Clementine is the





strongest driving force in the game, and almost all of the most important decisions to be made in it revolve around protecting her.

Telltale Games has created a survival horror masterpiece that is part point-and-click adventure and part role playing game. It is rooted in old school game mechanics from adventure games such as *Monkey Island*, where everything from combat to puzzle solving could be done with a mere press of a single button.

The simplistic game play style of *The Walking Dead: The Game* is easy enough for most people to grasp quite readily, and allows a player to become more engrossed in the actions that occur in the game, as they do not have to be so focused on hitting complex button combinations in order to get a character to engage in combat.

The RPG elements of the video game, such as the sophisticated dialogue choices, varies widely enough for you to select different answers on subsequent play-throughs of the game and get different results.

At times, you are only given a short amount of time to select a response and you must think fast to choose the desired answer. This creates impulsive, quick decision making sequences and quick-time events that keep you on your toes, as you never know when they are going to pop up on the screen.

Some of the themes of the video game are quite well done, and reflect what it would be like to find yourself starving and struggling to live after society has collapsed. My only complaint, really, is that the villains of the game are far too blatantly obvious when it comes to hinting at the fact that underlying their amicability is a sinister, often perverse, agenda. Unfortunately, this is a failing of *The Walking Dead* in general, so while it does accurately portray Robert Kirkman's writing style, it does no service to the intelligence of the players.

Thankfully, I found myself easily forgiving the

game for this shortcoming, as the compelling story of *The Walking Dead: The Game* is very entertaining, and the game play mechanics are simple enough that it makes the game fun to play.

The Walking Dead: The Game is a five part episodic game that can be purchased for download on XBOX 360, PlayStation 3, PC, Mac and iOS for \$5 each. You can purchase the episodes individually, or buy a season pass and have them download instantly onto your gaming console or computer once they become available.

Reviewed by Cassie Carnage

You can read more video game, movie and book reviews by Cassie on her blog at cassieshouseofhorror.blogspot.com

LITERATURE

DRAGON BALL Z "IT'S OVER 9,000!" WHEN WORLDVIEWS COLLIDE

2012, 72 pages, Author: Derek Padula.

A READ OF SUPER SAIYAN PROPORTIONS

It's a safe bet that anyone remotely acquainted with Japanese manga or anime is familiar with the name *Dragon Ball Z*. For over two decades the franchise has been an undeniable phenomenon and marketing juggernaut, one that still draws in fans the world over. Its unequaled staying power continues to spawn countless DVD releases, video games, apparel, toys, and – most recently – a re-cut version of the anime titled *Dragon Ball Z Kai*. Created by manga artist/writer Akira Toriyama, *Dragon Ball Z* not only managed to define a

generation of anime fans, it reshaped the medium itself, paving the way for popular franchises like *One Piece*, *Naruto*, and *Bleach*.

Derek Padula, author of *It's Over 9,000*, realizes what fuels the enduring popularity of *Dragon Ball Z* – it's not the otherworldly settings, epic fight scenes, or world-shaking explosions, but rather the series' deep-rooted themes and multi-faceted characters that have transcended cultural barriers. The franchise's main players, Goku and Vegeta, are at the forefront of Padula's analysis, exploring the moral lessons, individual growth, and inspiring trials that they undergo through a bitter rivalry and ultimate friendship. Looking at the relationship between Goku and Vegeta with an analytical eye really uncovers one of the most interesting – and powerful – character arcs in any anime series, past or present.

The title of Padula's book also holds special meaning, of which he goes into remarkable detail to dissect. "It's over 9,000!" was a (mistranslated) line said

by Vegeta early in the Americanized dub of the anime, and went on to become something of an internet phenomenon and pop-culture meme. As Padula explains, this one line has an overarching, profound significance to the entire franchise concerning differing worldviews, class-structure, and a rich underlying mythology. Much like how Joseph Campbell related the allegories, myths, and archetypes explored in his masterful *Hero of a Thousand Faces* to George Lucas' *Star Wars* saga, Padula provides an equally fascinating exploration of the themes in *Dragon Ball Z*, imparting insight into just how philosophical and sophisticated the source material truly is.

For the *Dragon Ball Z* fan, *It's Over 9,000* is a must read; even those jaded by the series, or no longer feel the attachment to it that they once had, are highly recommended to give Padula's book a look over – a newfound respect for the franchise is guaranteed. It's a worthy read for non-fans as well who may take interest in the series simply by learning how insightful and

layered *Dragon Ball Z* is. As a longtime fan of the series, it's an eye-opener to read Padula's captivating breakdown of the franchise's mythology and his study on themes that carry over in everyday life. In reality, *Dragon Ball Z* is far more than a simple 'action' show, but something that relates to everyone who strives to better themselves and a discourse on the boundaries of human potential.

Padula's *It's Over 9,000* can be purchased online at Amazon.com or at TheDaoOfDragonBall.com in both physical print and e-book formats. This is one not to miss!

Reviewed by Andrew Parietti

DOWN THE ROAD

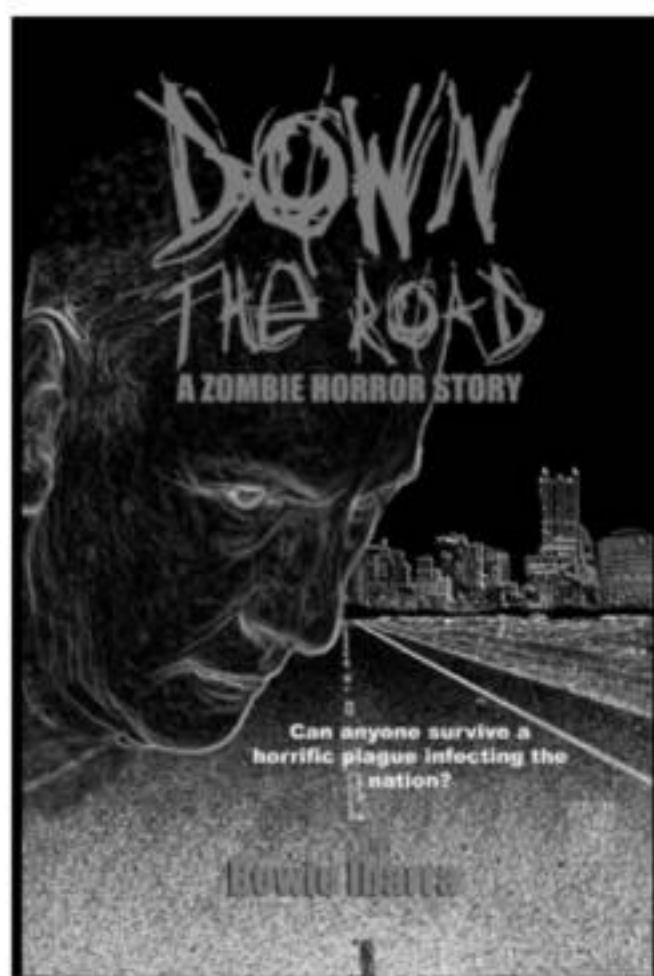
Gallery Books; 2012, 212 pages,
Author: Bowie Ibarra.

PULP FICTION OF THE ZOMBIE KIND

Pulp zombie fiction. To be honest, I wasn't familiar with the term before reading Bowie Ibarra's *Down the Road*. With its fast-paced combination of nonstop violence, tension, and buckets of gore, this zombie subgenre is exactly what you would think: undead madness as directed by Quentin Tarantino. In the case of *Down the Road*, all the elements are there, but the writing struggles to keep up with the action.

Down the Road tells the story of George Zaragosa, a young schoolteacher from Austin whose life is haunted by his fiancée's unsolved murder. While he is busy dealing with the aftermath of the





murder, the world collapses. The dead are coming back to life all across the world and they're devouring the living. The United States has quickly turned into a very dangerous place and martial law has been declared. The streets are in chaos, people are turning into uncivilized monsters, and the government agencies that are supposed to offer aid are abusive and corrupted. George decides to disobey

FEMA's orders and, instead of going to a rescue station, he gets in his car and heads out to his home in the town of San Uvalde. Instead of the usual drive, what George finds out there is a world drowned in anarchy and violence. Between being forced into a camp where the military is as bad as the zombies and coming face-to-face with the darkest ghost of his past in San Antonio, George will have to fight constantly to stay alive and continue his journey home.

There are a few elements in *Down the Road* that make it an interesting addition to the zombie genre. For example, Ibarra creates a world in which the government has crumpled and even soldiers have turned into vicious beasts who will do anything to stay alive. This scenario is frighteningly reasonable and makes the reader realize that, in extremely perilous situations, humans can be as scary as any imaginary fiend. Also, the action scenes have a cinematic quality to them that make the book a quick read: the violence is relentless, the gore comes quickly, and the good guys never miss a headshot.

Besides a bleak, unsafe world, the author pulls no punches when it comes to describing the grisly, dreadful things the characters witness and suffer through. The result is a book that contains enough murder, fistfights, blood, rape, and severed limbs to keep any George A. Romero fan satisfied.

Unfortunately, *Down the Road* stops working whenever there is a break from the brutality and bloodshed. The novel was originally self-published by Ibarra, which would make the obvious lack of editing somewhat understandable. However, this is a reprint edition published by Permuted Press/Gallery books, so the bad writing makes no sense. There are several things wrong with Ibarra's prose, but most of them are issues an experienced editor would have fixed with minimum effort. For starters, the descriptive passages are very repetitive. On page 59 you find

an example: "An awkward silence ensued. They rested for a moment in silence. No words were spoken." Two pages later, still in the same scene, you get these two sentences almost back to back: "They sat in silence for a few moments, meditating," and then "They sat again in silence, contemplating the comments."

The preceding examples are just a taste, but the narrative is plagued with such writing. Things like having the word "love" eight times in two pages or frequently describing the same scene or action with the exact same words has a very negative effect on the story. While the author's short, clear prose make the high-speed portions of the story enjoyable and easy to read, the rest of the plot is bogged down with unnecessary and tedious reiterations. The following sentence perfectly illustrates the kind of writing that affects the book: "Looking at this inconsiderate destruction of property, George wondered if several young boys inconsiderately destroyed some of these shops, some of these properties, some of these memories." To make matters even worse, the preceding paragraph also contains a sentence that includes the words "inconsiderate destruction of property."

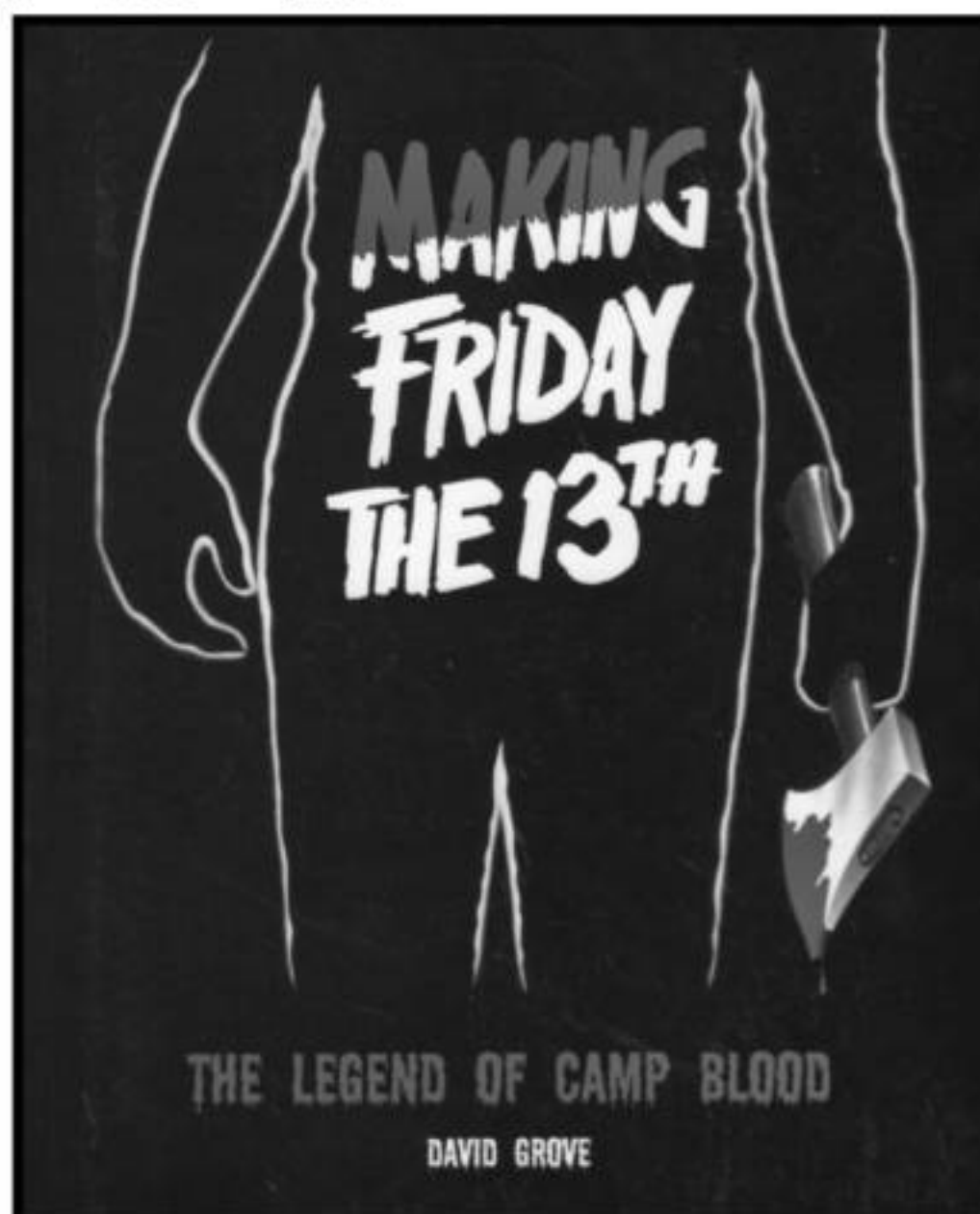
Ultimately, *Down the Road* is a classic case of a wonderful premise becoming the victim of a bad execution. Fans of zombie fiction are willing to look past characters lacking depth or even a few dull paragraphs in their quest for entertaining, gruesome exploits, but when half the story is unendingly reiterative, the experience can become unexciting.

Down the Road had the potential to become one of the defining books in the pulp zombie fiction subgenre. Alas, the poor writing makes it merely another mediocre entry in the ever-growing sphere of the walking dead.

Reviewed by Gabino Iglesias

MAKING FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE LEGEND OF CAMP BLOOD

FAB Press; 2005, 240 pages, Author: David Grove



A LEGACY WRITTEN IN BLOOD

There was no shortage of slasher films in the 1980s, but one franchise stood above the rest – and not just in terms of gory body count – *Friday the 13th*. As indestructible as Jason Voorhees was on the screen, he has since become an equally invincible money-making powerhouse. His trademark hockey mask alone is instantly recognizable and synonymous with the horror genre. With a legacy spanning over thirty years, the series has quite a history to its name and author David Grove gets to the bottom of every blood soaked detail.

Grove's book predates the 2009 remake, but the previous eleven films are covered in extraordinary depth: the birth of the Jason character, what led to the filmmakers using the infamous hockey mask in *Part 3*, the turbulent road leading to *Freddy vs. Jason* – no stone is left unturned.

Saying that Grove has done his research seems like a gross understatement; in short, it would be hard to imagine a *better* account of the series' storied history. Each *Friday* film gets the respect it rightfully deserves (each has its own lengthy chapter), with Grove examining the production aspects of the films, coupled with interviews and anecdotes from the cast and crew. A wealth of photos – some rare and never seen before – are included, making each page as much a visual history as a written one. The pop-culture fallout of the films is analyzed too, covering the commercial and cultural perspectives, in particular, the fandom that branched out of the first *Friday the 13th* outing.

Lately *Friday the 13th* fans may feel a little shortchanged, considering how *His Name Was Jason: 30 Years of Friday the 13th* (2009), a documentary on Jason's cinematic reign of terror, was largely inferior to the exhaustive *Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy* (2010) film. Fortunately, Grove's *Making Friday the 13th: The Legend of Camp Blood* fills in what *His Name Was Jason* missed, there's even a catalogued body count at the end of the book, just in case you lost track of how many fell victim to Jason's rampage.

What makes Grove's tome on *Friday the 13th* so worthwhile is that he's clearly a devoted fan to the franchise and never condescends to any particular film in the series. A worthy read for any *Friday the 13th* fan!

Reviewed by Clark Nielsen

FLU

Tantor Media; 2012, 262 pages, Author: Wayne Simmons

WILL IT MAKE YOU SICK?

The good thing about the immense popularity of zombies these days is that there's no shortage of books about them. The bad thing about this fact is that most of them should probably never have been written. And just like blind dates, if you've been subjected to too many of those bad ones, you can get a bit gun shy about trying another one. When you start a new zombie book, you may even tell a friend beforehand what you're going to do so that they can be ready with a 'rescue call.' That way if things go in the tank fast (which is likely): take the call, close the book, and feel okay about it because you had to go and take care of that medical emergency with your mom.

Thankfully, you're in good hands with Wayne Simmons and you can disregard that phone call from your friend. His zombie book *Flu* will hook you from the start. The audience is thrust into the story headfirst during a heated police mission to quarantine a flat in the city of Belfast. There is a flu epidemic in Northern Ireland and it's not the usual flavor. No chicken soup will help this nasty one. This one is deadly. Only when you die from this sickness, you come back with a taste

for living flesh. The government will take whatever means necessary to prevent the spread of this plague.

Flu is the first book in Simmons' zombie series. It sold very well in the UK and now has made its way to the US via Tantor Media and is even available as an audio book. In *Flu*, Simmons shows us several small groups of survivors that are trying to make their

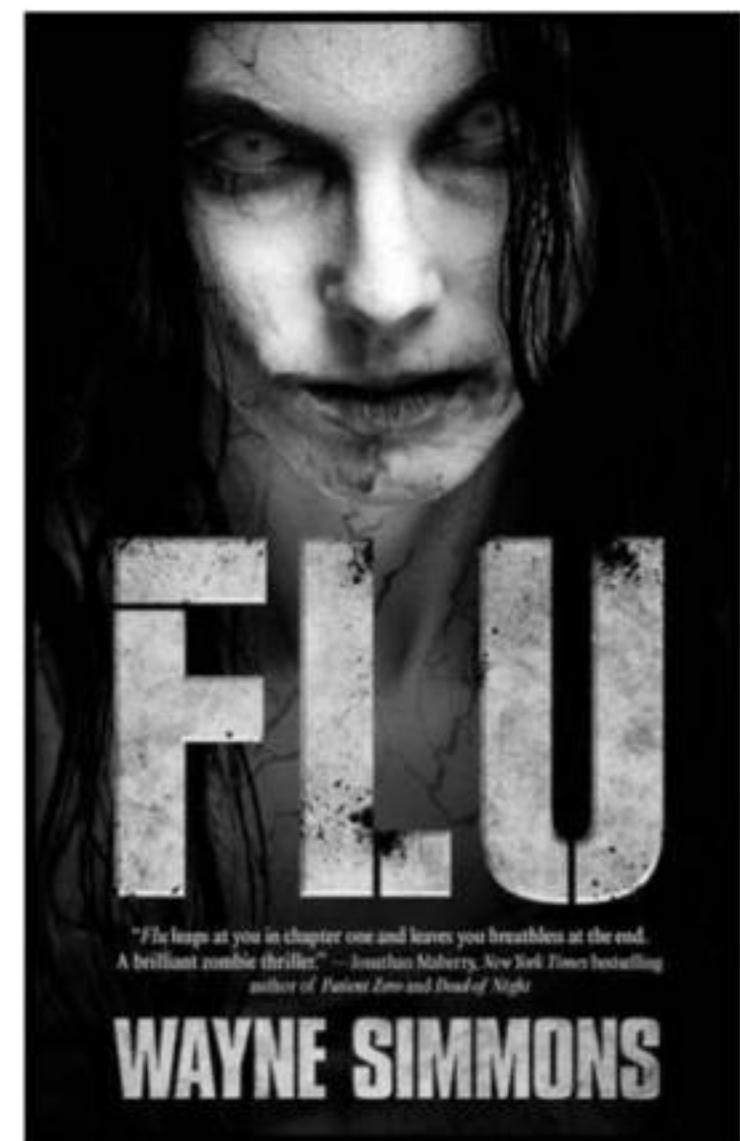
way in the apocalypse. Each group is traveling down their own path. And since all of the action takes place in or near Belfast, it's not surprising that their travels eventually intersect with each other. What will happen when the paths cross of these police officers, ne'er-do-wells, military officials, and "normal" citizens? Simmons draws us into their daily nightmare which culminates in an answer to that very question.

Wayne Simmons has churned out an exceptionally well-written novel. His attention to detail and his flawed, yet realistic, characters make for an easy read. In a genre that is so rife with pretenders, fans can really relish in this. Is it a perfect novel? No, but none of its sufferings are due to poor prose. Many books are guilty of being overly ambitious. *Flu* is the opposite, maybe not ambitious enough. The entire story is told from a limited number of points-of-view, therefore the reader is just as in the dark about this whole disaster as the characters themselves. There is very little theorization as to why it's happening. There is no mention of what is going on in the rest of the world. Everything is centered around Belfast. And because of the limited scope, the story never really feels as epic as maybe it could.

That being said, the Northern Ireland setting is refreshing. Simmons was born there, so the geography is used convincingly. The UK slang is in there. The blending in of the politics and tumultuous history of the region is seamless. These details are crucial and act like a new coat of paint on an aging set of wheels.

Under the hood, though, it's business as usual. When it comes to the monsters, *Flu* doesn't bring much new to the table. The zombies here are your typical Romero-esque undead – slow and easily dispatched with the conventional destruction of the brain or head. There is one behavioral aspect to them that you haven't seen before. To the reader, however, this new behavior may be strange and rather puzzling and it's left unexplained. To be fair, there may be answers for this in the book's sequel, *Fever*.

The largest hurdle for readers to get over will be some portions in the middle of *Flu* where the story begins to languish a little. The mysteries melt into the



background while the day-to-day survival takes center stage and becomes a little tedious. Stick around, though, because the heat is turned up all the way to the fiery end.

Reviewed by Kevin Sproles

MUSIC

MISFITS THE DEVIL'S RAIN *Misfits Records; 2011.*

A HELL OF A RETURN

Firstly, *The Devil's Rain* was released in 2011, but it never seemed to get the respect it warranted...so for those who might have missed out, here's the rundown on the first new *Misfits* studio album in 12 years.

Nowadays, there appear to be two diametrically opposing groups of *Misfits* fans: those who can't stand *any* material after original singer/songwriter Danzig left the band, and those who enjoy the "newer" iterations of *Misfits*. Personally, I like it all – though some albums are weaker than others (admittedly, *American Psycho* and *Project 1950* – a cover album – were just passable), with 1998's *Famous Monsters* being, in my opinion, one of their strongest. Now, finally, fans are given the latest installment in the *Misfits* legacy.

The current line-up has original *Misfits* bass player Jerry Only taking on the mantle of lead singer. Only's vocals differ from previous singers Glenn Danzig and Michale Graves, but he still delivers that trademark *Misfits* sound. Unfortunately *The Devil's Rain*, as a whole, falls short of the raw energy of *Walk Among Us* and never captures the diverse range of *Famous Monsters*. On a positive note, *The Devil's Rain* still finds a medium somewhere in-between the previous eras of *Misfits* greatness, largely succeeding with most of its 16 tracks.

The first track (and album title), 'The Devil's Rain', takes its name from the 1975 horror film starring Captain Kirk himself, William Shatner, who finds himself at odds

with a Satanic cult. It's a great opener to the album, followed up by 'Vivid Red' and the standout 'Land of the Dead'. Other memorable songs include 'Cold In Hell', 'The Black Hole', 'Curse of the Mummy's Hand', 'Unexplained', 'Monkey's Paw', and 'Death Ray'. 'Dark Shadows' is a phenomenal song, even if it is somewhat removed from the sound of past *Misfits* tunes; apparently Jerry Only tried to get the song into Tim Burton's recent film, but to no avail, which is unfortunate as it would have been a nice fit. 'Ghost of Frankenstein' is another highlight, and would be fun to hear live. As with most albums, there tends to be a few weaker songs, with 'Sleepwalkin' being the biggest disappointment this time around. Overall, *The Devil's Rain* stands as a solid album and a welcome addition to the *Misfits* library of music.

As mentioned, the energy does feel muted when compared to earlier records, but for a band that hasn't released new songs in over a decade, it's a suitable return. Hopefully this means more material will be released in the near future. Most *Misfits* fans who have sworn off and abandoned the recent line-up and new sound probably won't give this a chance, but I urge them to reconsider. *The Devil's Rain* is a worthy entry in the horror punk genre and Jerry Only proves that he can still pull it off.

Also, special mention needs to go to artist Arthur Suydam, who painted the great album cover for *The Devil's Rain*. He's also responsible for the popular *Marvel Zombies* covers!

Reviewed by Jerome Haller



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DAVEY HORROR'S COLLECTOR'S CORNER

FLUFFY FROM CREEPSHOW



Davey Horror has unearthed Fluffy from "The Crate" segment of 1982's *Creepshow*, directed by George A. Romero and written by Stephen King. This 6-piece resin model kit was released in 1992 and was limited to a 50 kit run.

The crate seen here was custom-built with balsa wood. Miniature chains and padlocks were then added for a more authentic look. The June 19th, 1834 "Arctic Expedition" date was handwritten on the wood, along with "Ship to Horlicks University via Julia Carpenter"—all of which is screen accurate to the crate in *Creepshow*.



